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The Morrices

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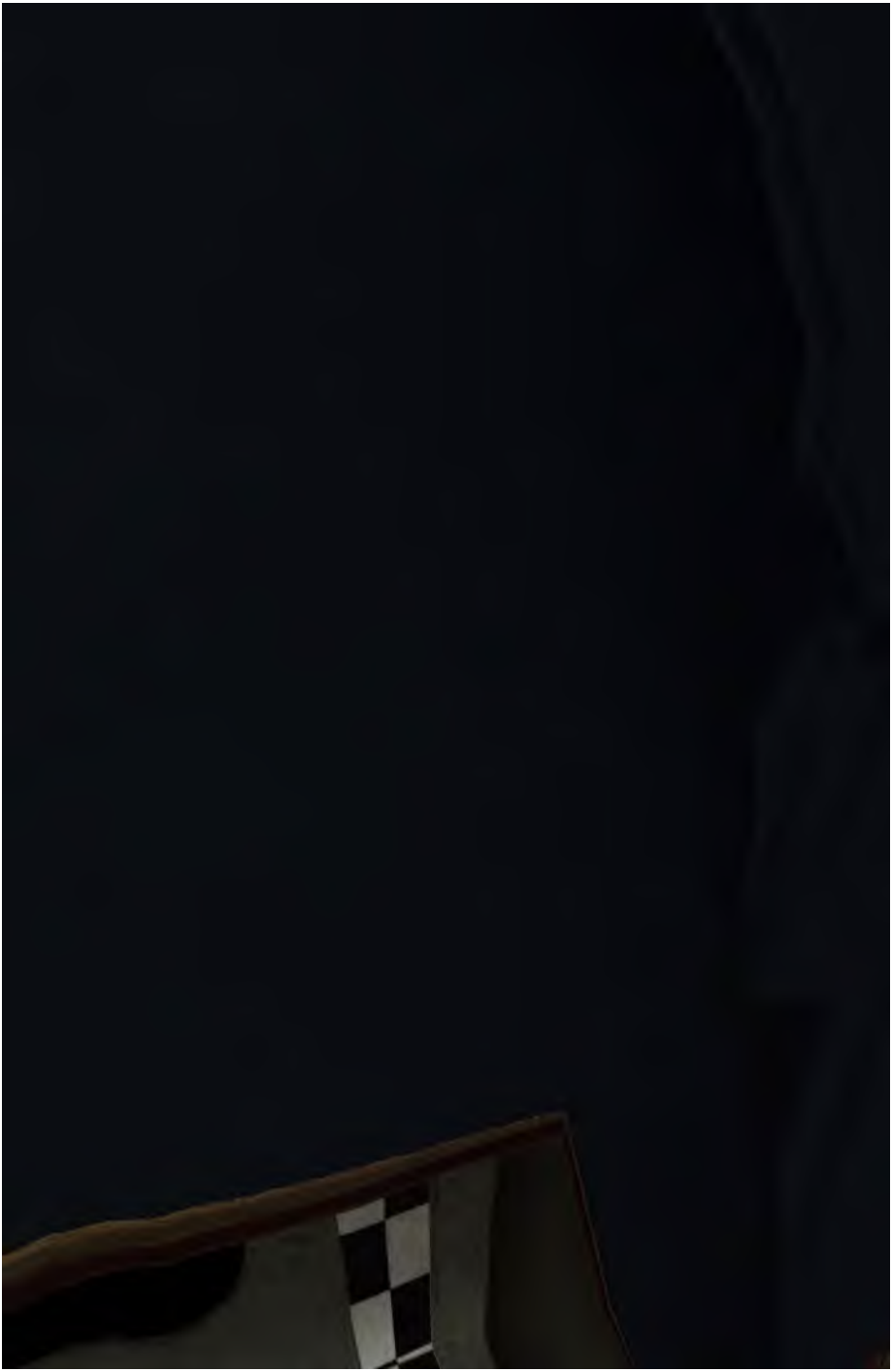

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THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

VOL. II.

THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

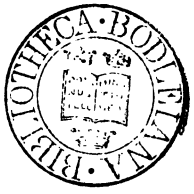
BY

G. T. LOWTH,

AUTHOR OF

"AROUND THE KREMLIN,"

&c. &c.



"Exception proves the rule."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE inquest on the body of Robert Tapps was held in a room at the "Three Crowns" at Kew, on the third day of the finding of the body. The usual formalities having been gone through, the surgeon of Kew, Mr. Jones, was asked to give his opinion as to the cause of death. He said he had examined the body, by order of the Coroner, and he gave it as his decided opinion that the blow on the back of the head had been the cause of death, as the peri-

osteum was broken through, and the skull was fractured, and blood-vessels had been ruptured, and there was extravasated blood over the brain. When he was asked by the Coroner if it were possible that the blow had not caused death, but had only made the young man fall into the water, and that possibly the water might have caused death by drowning, the surgeon showed that if death had ensued from drowning the lungs would have shown marks of suffocation, but that on examination they did not do so. The blow on the head was quite sufficient to cause death.

After the examination of the surgeon, the father of Robert Tapps entered the room where the Coroner was sitting. He said that his son had told him, on the morning of that day, that he intended to go down in the afternoon by the towing-path to visit his aunt at Mortlake, Mrs. Codling, and

should come home by the Strand at about five o'clock. He saw him set off on foot at about half-past two o'clock, and he never saw him alive after. He had not the slightest suspicion of any person as likely to have struck his son, as he had not an enemy in the world, to the best of his belief, his son being of a most amiable and gentle disposition.

The constable informed the Coroner that the aunt of Robert Tapps from Mortlake, Mrs. Codling, was in the house, and her husband was ill in bed. So Mrs. Codling was brought in. She was accommodated with a chair, and appeared much distressed. She was a stout, good-looking woman, of middle age. When she was asked when she had last seen her nephew, Robert Tapps, she said, "It was very terrible for her to come there to give evidence about her nephew, but she knew her duty." She

put her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed. When she was a little recovered, she was again asked the same question in a kind manner by the Coroner.

"It was a Wednesday," said Mrs. Codling, "and I shall never forget the day if I was to live a hundred years. My nephew, Robert Tapps, come in smiling and happy, as he always were, and we said, his uncle and me, we was sorry he had come when dinner was over; and he said he had had his dinner at home afore he started, and he'd stay on and have something with his uncle and me afore he went home at dusk, and we said he were always welcome; and then he fell to a-telling us of the things he'd seen as he come along the tow-path. He'd seen a lot o' horses towing a barge up-stream—for the tide was running out, you please to understand, sir—and one of the horses was a big black he admired—our

Bob, as we called him, his uncle and me, always did like horses; and then he telled us how he had been up to Wick, and had seen the horses there. Lors me! how he did go on! He was in such spirits, poor fellow, and little thinking of what was coming."

"Did he tell you of his seeing anything on the river—anything particular?" said the Coroner, with a kind voice and manner.

"I was a-coming to that, sir," said Mrs. Codling, "and I was a-telling you about the horses up at Wick first, according as your worship wished to hear about my nephew on that visit to his uncle and me. Why, there was one of them horses he called Monkey—and he was a monkey—three-parts one, leastways. If anyone got a-top of him as he didn't like, why, there he was for all the world like a mad thing—a-kicking, and a-rearing, and a-biting with his

teeth, fit to tear the legs off of a man, and wouldn't go noways, but lay down in the road. I never heerd tell of such a horse as that Monkey; and then young Mr. Morrice he liked riding this horse, and didn't mind not a bit of having his legs tored open, but rather liked it, though it must have tored his——"

"I am sorry to interrupt you, Mrs. Codling," said the Coroner, mildly, "but did your nephew tell you of his having seen anything particular on the river?"

"Your worship," said Mrs. Codling, "I'll tell you the honest truth. My nephew telled his uncle and me that he was going home by The Wick, and the osiers, and Strand, and we wanted him to have our little chaise and horse, and go home comfortable by the road—but no; and he telled us that as he was coming from Kew on the tow-path there wasn't much on the river, but as he was

opposite to Wick he saw a barge laying by the osiers; and he saw a boat come away from the barge with two men in it, and go up towards Strand, and then he see it go back again all down to the barge; and then he come on to our place, and there were only one man in the boat when it come down again."

"Did you see this barge?" said the Coroner.

"Lors me, no, your worship. We never had no thought about any barge while we was talking to Bob."

"And at what time did your nephew leave you?" said the Coroner.

"I can't mind the time to a minute, sir," said Mrs. Codling, "but it was getting darkish—dusk you may say—about half an hour after four, and a man put him across from nigh our place to where there's a bit of an openish place on t'other side in the osiers;

and he telled us, too, that he had seen Mr. Morrice and young Mr. Frank walking along inside the rails under the tall trees by the water, and Bob was saying he should go up again to the house now the gentlefolks were come home again, and see the horses, and ask the old groom, Dick there, if anything had happened with that mare Quince. I mind the name by the tree in our garden, and Bob said it was the name; and this mare Quince, if anyone was atop of her, and he jest took off his hat as a gentleman might to a lady, to say 'Good morning, your ladyship,' this Quince she'd be up in a minnit, and jest jump clear over anything that was nigh, a hedge, or a wall, or a house, or anything—it didn't sinnify, over she goes. 'Tis a wonder to me what they gentlefolks can see of pleasure in riding horses like that. I do believe gentlefolks is different sort of people from what we are—I do."

Mrs. Codling coming to a stop, the Coroner asked her if she could recollect anything of her nephew saying he was to meet anyone on his way home by the Strand.

"He never said one word to his uncle and me about meeting anybody on Strand; he jest said 'Good night, uncle and aunt,' quite happy, and we said 'Good night, Bob,' and then we never see him alive again. Oh! dear heart! to think he should say 'Good night' in that way, so happy, to his uncle and me, and we never to see him again!" And the worthy woman broke out in sobs again. This being all Mrs. Codling had to say, she presently left the room.

The boatman who had put Robert Tapps across the river that afternoon was called in, but he added little to the foregoing. He had merely sculled him across to the osiers, and the young man had given him threepence for his trouble, and he said

"Good night." The young man had said nothing particular on the way over—nothing about meeting anybody; and then he had gone along the path in among the osiers, and he never saw him again. He knew it was Mr. Robert Tapps, because he had often seen him at Mr. Codling's house. The time of day when he had put him across was about dusk—it might be half after four or thereabouts—he couldn't say exactly. He could see a man's face plain a little way off; he couldn't then see any barge lying up by the osiers near the creek, because it was too far up to the creek from Mortlake at dusk for him to see it; but there had been a barge lying there a good part of the afternoon up to four o'clock, because he had said so to one of his mates; and he hadn't seen it go down. One had gone down with the tide after dark, because he had seen her light; but he couldn't say if it was the same.

as the one lying off the osiers so long. This was all the evidence.

The Coroner said, "There was nothing whatever here to show how this savage murder had been committed. There was the fact that, by the evidence of the surgeon who had examined the body, a blow of some heavy blunt instrument—a terrible and foul blow—had been given by some one on the back part of the head of Robert Tapps, and had caused his death. This was clear. The young man had left home at Kew at about half-past two o'clock; had told his father that he was going to Mortlake, to see his aunt, Mrs. Codling; had walked along the towing-path, and arrived at his aunt's house at about three o'clock. He had left the house about half-past four, crossed the river to some osier beds opposite to Mortlake, had walked into these by a path, and his dead body had been found only a few

hundred yards from the landing-place from the boat, on the following morning. His expected time of returning home that day to Kew had been declared by the young man's father to be five o'clock; and if he had walked straight home from the boat where he was last seen, along by The Wick grounds and the Strand to Kew, he would have reached home just about five o'clock. It was therefore most probable that he was killed between half-past four and five o'clock. Now, during that afternoon, according to the evidence of Mrs. Codling, and this was supported by the evidence of the boatman who had put Robert Tapps across the river, a barge had been seen lying off the osiers not far from the creek near the head of which the body was found, and it was seen there up to four o'clock, and no one had seen the barge go down the river, and therefore the inference was that it was still

there till after the time when the murder was committed. Then there was the statement of Mrs. Codling that her nephew had mentioned to her and her husband, that he had seen a boat with two men in it leave the barge, go up the river towards the Strand, and then return a short time afterwards with only one man in it, and go back to the barge and be fastened to it, and the man go on board and remain there. Now, where did that barge come from? Where was it going? Where did that boat put that man on shore, and who was he?"

The Coroner considered that "these were important questions. He was of opinion that on the discovery of who this man was in that boat, and where that boat had put him on shore, very much depended. This might lead to the detection of the author of this atrocious crime. He did not say that the finding of this man would have neces-

sarily important results, because that man may have been a mere sailor, or a boatman, or any other honest man, and he may know nothing of this murder, as the people of that barge may know nothing of it; but he was of opinion that it may have important consequences. He would suggest, therefore, that the inquest should be adjourned for a few days, to give time for the constable to make all inquiries on this point. In the present state of the evidence the jury could hardly arrive at any satisfactory opinion on the case." The jury agreed to this, and so the inquest was adjourned; and all parties were requested to be in attendance on the fourth day from that, to go further into the matter.

Before many hours were over the statement of Mrs. Codling at the inquest on Robert Tapps was known throughout the neighbourhood. It was the one subject of conversation in every house at Kew, and

the Strand, and Mortlake. The great question was, what barge was that lying off the osiers all that afternoon?—and who was the man whom Robert Tapps had seen go up from the barge in a boat towards the Strand, and not return to it? Everybody guessed, and all along the Strand the question was asked in the public-houses—and there were three of these—if that boat had been up to either of them on that day, and had put a man ashore. But this was denied positively by all the landlords; no boat had come up the stream at the time named on that day, to the landing opposite either of those houses, and put a man ashore, and gone away again. The constable was in each and all of those houses, that evening of the inquest, making his inquiries, but he could gain no information whatever. Further up the river, above Kew Bridge, he could learn nothing. Oddly enough, everybody, for that afternoon, and

the day following, overlooked Sangster. Nobody thought of Sangster. The fact was that old Sangster and his wife lived much to themselves, in a solitary cottage at a quarter of a mile from the Strand, and the old man was seldom seen there, and the old woman more seldom still. So nobody thought of people they so rarely saw. Strangely enough this kind of omission of the sense often occurs. The very thing you are in search of will lie close to you—under your eye—and you overlook it, and your mental eye does not see it. The constable had never had occasion to go to Sangster's little place, and so he scarcely knew of it.

But there were circumstances connected with this crime which added greatly to the effect of it on the minds of those living in the neighbourhood. The murder was that of a young man in a decent position in the local society, the son of a highly respectable

man, the landlord of a small inn much frequented by well-to-do middle-class people from London. Then Tapps the father, and Mrs. Tapps the mother of the murdered man, were much considered by Mr. Morrice of The Wick, and Robert Tapps had been often down there, and was looked upon with favour by the river-side neighbours of the Strand, as an object of good-natured preference by young Mr. Frank Morrice, and everybody round them had a good word for Mr. Frank. This had given a kind of stamp to the Tapps family in the local opinion, and especially to the young man Bob. Moreover, the murder had been committed in the osiers of The Wick, and close under the park wall; and more than this, the body had been carried, by the order of Mr. Morrice, and in the presence of Frank, by The Wick servants up to the house, and had been laid in the large

orangery, until Tapps, the father, had come and taken it away to Kew. All this tended to throw a kind of subdued light about the act—a mild halo round the whole transaction. The following was the position the event assumed in the eyes of the Strand, and Mortlake and Kew: "An unknown man comes down the river to a barge off The Wick, lies hid there all day, watches for young Robert Tapps crossing from Mortlake, meets him by the osiers on the path by the creek, kills him, and then escapes quietly down the river in the dark, and leaves not a trace behind him. Another unknown man is put ashore at the Strand, and disappears." Of course this position was not the true one; but then it had in it much of the element of truth, and that is quite sufficient for the nourishment of a general interest. Besides, there was in it that charm, the Unknown; and this was

much better, and more exciting, and more enjoyable than a more true and prosaic knowledge of the circumstances. Thus it was a great event for the neighbourhood.

There was one circumstance in it which captured the imagination of many persons—the carrying of the body up to The Wick, and the laying it in a kind of state, as they pictured it, in the grand foreign orangery, by the orders of Mr. Morrice himself. When this was spoken of, there was really an amazing interest, in addition to the unknown, thrown over the whole transaction. The men of the Strand who knew Frank shook their heads very gravely and knowingly, and said, "Mr. Frank was always a rare un—no better; he wasn't proud—he were good-hearted." And the women—and particularly the young ones, who all thought him very handsome—said, "It was beautiful of him to have his friend taken up

to the great orange-house and laid out there;" and they put up their handkerchiefs, and squeezed each other's hands, and some of the young ones cried.

Poor Bob! The mourning over him was of rather a mixed character. The account, too, by Mrs. Codling of the horses at The Wick added to the effect. When the jurymen related abroad what she had said of those animals, the women held up their hands—that Mr. Frank should like riding such horses was something like tempting fate.

The adjourned inquest was looked forward to with a profound interest. In the meanwhile, the centre of attraction was the spot of the murder by the creek. People from Kew hired boats—though it was in November—and went down to the creek, which they had never heard of before. If it was high water they were pulled up it, and

there they got out on the bank, and examined the spur of the wall projecting from the beech-tree causeway, round which any-one passing must climb, and which Robert Tapps must have just passed when he was attacked.

And then they examined the spot where the body had been found; and they all inquired carefully where and how it was carried along the path under the wall of the causeway, and through the gate in the iron railings by the side of the old Dutch summer-house, and so across the grounds to the house. And they all were anxious to know exactly where the large orangery was—the place where the body was "laid out," as they called it.

Men walked down at low tide from the Strand, by the rough path under the arbeles, to see the spot, but the women all went by water in boats. It was much too interest-

ing a visit to the spot to be made by a rough walk. They made a little kind of festa of it, and put on their good clothes; they met other parties on the ground from Mortlake, and they saw well-dressed people there, ladies and gentlemen.

The indirect connexion with The Wick, and the secrecy of the deed, and the admixture in it of the Unknown, were too much for anyone to resist, except strong-minded men and women. And in that month of November, in the year of our story, that select portion of our species did not flourish largely in the vicinity of Kew and the Strand and Mortlake. Poor Bob! The mourning over his fate was of a very mingled character.

CHAPTER II.

IT was the Monday morning after the inquest, which had taken place on the Saturday previous. Newspapers were not so numerous or so cheap in the days of our story as they are now, and then a paper was a rare thing on board the barge. But sometimes a Sunday paper reached it. The inquest of the Saturday appeared in a Sunday paper, and this reached the "Columbine" only on the Sunday afternoon. In this Harding and Susan read the account of the inquest at Kew. Harding looked very serious after reading it, but said little. He mentioned Tom, and Susan reminded him that he had sent Tom to Greenwich on the

day before. Susan now knew what was the meaning of Frank's coming down to the barge on the Friday, and of his message of warning for Tom.

On the Monday, about midday, a man came from the wharf to say that Harding was wanted in the office of Mr. Wilcox. Susan saw the man come, heard him deliver his message, and felt sure she knew the meaning of it. She did not utter a word to her father, and he went off silently to the wharf. On reaching the office on the wharf, a small building, a projection from the large house at the far side of it, he found Mr. Charles, seated at his desk with a newspaper before him. On Harding entering, he said, with a grave but not unkindly voice, "Come in, Harding, and shut the door." Then, after a pause, during which he looked hard at the bargeman, he said, "Here is a very strange story in the news-

paper, an account of an inquest—have you seen it?"

"Yes, sir, I had been a-reading it yesterday arternoon."

"And what do you think of the story, Harding?"

"Why, Mr. Charles, I can't make no more of it than the dead." And he looked his employer straight in the face, in his usual honest, direct way.

"I believe you, Harding; but answer me this question, do you think that this story has anything to do with the barge?"

"Mr. Charles, as I'm a honest man, I do; but, as I hopes to be saved,"—and, as he spoke, the man brought his hand down heavily on the table by which he was standing—"I knows no more of this bad job of killing this young man than the child unborn."

Mr. Charles did not further notice this

assertion than by a kindly nod of his head, at the same time saying, "Now, Harding, tell me all what you did with the barge on that last voyage down, after leaving Brentford?"

The bargeman collected himself for a moment or two, and then, in a plain, simple way he told his story. "We leaves Brentford at about a half after one, or thereabouts, and, the tide running out, I counted we should make Putney about four o'clock, or half arter. You may remember, sir, as we had orders to stop there?" Mr. Charles nodded his head in confirmation of this. "Then we shoots Kew a little afore two. Tom and me has the oars out to put us through, and Sammy had hold of the rudder. We comes through all right, and drops down past Strand. The out-tide allays has a set over to Strand, cause of the bend o' the land, and runs strong down that side, and

so, if there be water enough, we allays drops down past Strand side o' the island. We holds on easy all down past Wick, and the tide put us over a bit handy the osiers. When we was nigh on the creek, you mind, sir, I was sitting in the bows, when I looks down, and there was water coming up through the floor o' the barge—she'd sprung a leak. I jumps down, and sure enough there was a plank a bit started. So I calls to Tom, who was on top of the cabin, talking to my daughter, and we drops the anchor over the bows as soon as we could, and then the barge swings round."

"What made you stop? Couldn't you have plugged the hole, and gone on to Putney?" said Mr. Charles.

"True, sir, we might ha' plugged the hole, and we might ha' kep' on, but then I didn't like the look of it, and I considered it was safe to have it stopped at onst, afore it got

worser; and then I knowed there was a man as lived jest above Wick as could do it well, for he had done a odd job or two afore for me, and so I stopped her."

"And you lay off the osiers?" said Mr. Charles.

"Jest above the creek, you mind, sir, and I sends off Tom with the boat to fetch Sangster,—that's the man's name,—and he brings him back."

"Yes—and what then?" said Mr. Charles.

"Well, Sangster he comes aboard; he stops the leak, and he says it was like to be a bad one, if not stopped at onst; and then Tom he takes Sangster home again."

"Did Sangster stay any time on board?"

"Yes, sir, he was there a goodish bit, and he takes a cup o' tea along of Susan and me; and we stayed talking a bit, because there warn't no hurry; and then Tom sculls him up home again."

"Yes; and what then?" said Mr. Charles. "What o'clock was it then?"

"When Sangster left, it was a bit arter three, and I minds me of this, 'cause when Susan offered to make some tea he said it was a bit early for that, and Susan said that didn't mind; and whilst we was talking a clock over to Mortlake sung out three. It was a darkish sort of a day all through, and that arternoon it shut in early more nor common; and so, when we was drinking our tea, it was a-getting thick like —there was a sort of half a fog on the river."

"And then?" said Mr. Charles, interrogatively.

"We laid there a bit after Sangster were gone, and Tom said he'd like to kill a rat or two up the creek. It allays was a rare place for rats, that creek; and I've a-killed 'em afore now myself up there; and so I let him

have the boat. He wouldn't have Sammy, cause he said Sammy'd make a noise and frighten the rats, and he shouldn't have no sport. Tom were at work about the barge a bit, and when he went off to the creek it must have been nigh upon four, though I didn't take account of the time."

"And how long was he away?" said Mr. Charles, in a tone of voice more serious than before.

"He might be away an hour or so, it might be more, it might be lesser—I mind me it were dark when he come on board again. He'd got six or seven rats, and when he'd told Susan and Sammy about it, arter a bit we hauled up the anchor, and dropped down to Putney at the tail of the tide. Ye see, sir, by your orders it didn't matter what time we was at Putney, so as we saved the ebb."

"When Tom returned on board," said

Mr. Charles, "were his manner and way of talking the same as usual?"

Harding hesitated a minute before he answered, and he looked away at the opposite wall of the office, as if trying to recollect the circumstances of the time with exactness before he spoke. Then he said slowly—

"Ye see, sir, Tom was allays a bit onsteady—allays—and I did all I could to make him think o' things with more sense like; but some lads they've got heads as don't take in that kind o' larning; and Tom had got a way of talking, saying as people was agin him, and they warn't no better nor him, and they hadn't no right to have no more than he had, and such like things, as haven't no sense in them; and that evening he was saying this to Susan, for I heerd him afore he went off in the boat to the creek; and when he comes back he goes on again, and he said as he'd teach them swells, as he

called gentlefolks, as they warn't no better than he; but then I didn't take any account of it."

"Was that all?" said Mr. Charles.

"That was about all, sir."

"Where is Tom now?" said Mr. Charles.

"He's down the river, sir. I had occasion to send to his uncle down at Greenwich, and, as there warn't nothing partickler for Tom for a day or two, till the next voyage, I sent him."

"I must see him directly he returns," said Mr. Charles. "You understand, Harding?"

"The truth on it is, sir, I have been wishing that Tom could get another place than aboard the barge, and he knows that, and he be gone to his uncle about it. That's the truth; and I was a-going to speak to you about it."

"I understand. You remember, Harding,

that his continuing there at all for some time past has been your own doing; we let him stay because you desired it."

"Yes, sir, I knows it all—it's true. His father was my mate, and when he died, as I telled you, sir, I said as I'd stand by the lad, and do all I could for him. I have done what I could for him, but a many times I've wished him away from the barge —that I have; there's a many reasons why I wish he were gone."

"Very well—let me see him on his return," said Mr. Charles; and then, as the bargeman turned to leave the office, "By-the-by, the adjourned inquest is to be held at Kew on Wednesday, and a summons is arrived for you and Tom from the Coroner, and you will both have to attend."

"Yes, sir," said Harding, and he left the office to return on board.

After he was gone, Mr. Charles rang his

bell, and when the clerk came, "Send in the man who is waiting to see me." In a minute the constable from Kew walked into the office. "I have spoken," said Mr. Charles, "to the man who manages the 'Columbine,' and he and the young man, Thomas Plank, shall be in attendance at Kew at the adjourned inquest, to give any information they possess to the Coroner."

"Very well, Mr. Wilcox," said the constable. "I will do as you wish, as you seem to have partikler sentiments about this matter of your barge, though it ain't quite reg'lar. I shall leave the summons with you, as you make a request on it."

"I should say that the young man is not in the way at present," said Mr. Charles, as the constable turned to go. "He is away on some business, but he is expected back every hour, and he shall be sure to be there —you may depend on me."

"It is very special important," said the constable, "as that young man should be there."

"I understand," said Mr. Charles.

It was at the same time that this was occurring at the wharf that Tom Plank was in a public-house at Blackwall. When he left the barge, by the direction of Harding, he had gone to his uncle at Greenwich. He was not in a very happy frame of mind. He knew that Harding desired him to obtain some other situation, and he suspected that this was partly caused by his admiration for Susan. He was angry at being in a manner compelled to leave the "Columbine;" angry at leaving Susan; angry with Harding; angry with fortune; angry with all the world. Besides all this, there was the recollection in his mind of what Susan had told him of Frank's coming to Southwark. In such a frame of mind, Tom was

not a very welcome guest at his uncle's; so, having remained there two nights, he crossed the water to Blackwall, borrowing a boat from his uncle, who was a net-maker for fishermen.

Here he fell in with some sailors from a Canadian ship, and, attracted by their talk about the ocean and Canada, he passed the morning at the public-house, intending to return to Greenwich in the evening. While he was sitting at the "Blue Anchor" about mid-day with two or three of his new acquaintances, one of them, with a newspaper before him on the table, suddenly exclaimed—"Here's a go!—here's a blessed 'quest upon a man killed up the river!"

"Whereabouts?" asked another.

"Where?—why, up by Kew. Where's Kew?—blest if I know!"

"Kew?—why, here's this man has been telling us a yarn or two about the river,

and he knows all about it. I say, where's Kew?"—addressing himself to Tom.

"Kew?" said Tom; "why, it's a goodish way up, handy to Richmond and Brentford."

"Well, here's been something queer up there anyhow; there's a man been found with his head broke, and nobody knows who's been and done it, laying by some osiers on the river."

Tom felt a strange sensation creep over him as he heard these words. He got up and reached over the table to the man with the newspaper, and asked him to let him look at it. Tom was not a good reader, but he could manage with care to make out print, and in a minute his head was buried in the paper. Here he read the account of the finding of the body of Robert Tapps under The Wick wall by the osiers, the inquest on it, the date of the murder, and

the evidence of the elder Tapps; and also of Mrs. Codling, as to the boat and as to the hour at which it had been probably committed; and that of the surgeon, as to the immediate cause of the death—the blow of some instrument on the back of the head. Tom shaded his face with the paper for some time after he had finished reading it, which enabled him to command his countenance. The sailors had gone on talking round him of other things. But presently one of them referred to the inquest and the murder, and asked Tom "what he made of it?" Putting the paper from him with as much composure as he could muster, Tom called for a glass of beer, and then said: "I can't make nothing on it more nor this—some cove have been and got quarrelling maybe with some o' they chaps as hangs about there over to Mortlake or Kew, and he's hurted hisself," and he made a grim attempt at a

smile. But at the same time he rose from his seat, walked to the bar, drank off his beer, paid for it, and saying, "Good day, mates," walked out of the house. The sailors looked at each other. When Tom was fairly out of hearing one of them said quietly, "That young fellow was took rather aback, though he did try to hide it. I'd lay a pint he knows more o' that bisness than he'd like to tell us."

Tom walked away to the water side, and got into his boat. Pulling himself out into the stream, he let the boat float. The tide was running out. Here he floated down for some time, quite uncertain what to do or what to think about this matter. "Tis a regglar puzzle," he said to himself, "that's what it is. I can't make nothing on it whatsomever. Who's young Tapps? I'm blest if ever I set eyes on him in all my born days; father lives over to Kew; never

heerd tell of him nor of this un neether; and then he goes and gets his head broke jest there by the osiers on that 'ere arternoon. Tapps—Tapps—don't know the name, not a atom. Somebody must ha' had a blow up with him, and then, jest acause our barge is a-laying by them osiers, here comes that swell down from Wick to tell Susan about it; and here's a regglar muddle about our barge, as if we had anything to do with this young Tapps. What ha' we to do with Tapps? If that young swell, that Morrice, had a-been in his place it 'ud a-been more to my liking, coming a-sneaking arter Susan. However, it is a queer business any ways, and they'll be sure to read all this quest up at the wharf, and Mr. Harding will be put out, and want me to go more nor ever, and Susan, ey—there's a cussed job!"

So Tom went on talking to himself, and trying to persuade himself that he had no-

thing to do with young Tapps and the event by the osiers, while his boat drifted farther and farther down the stream. So he passed the day till the tide turned. Then he began to float upwards. Sometimes he stopped his boat, as if he thought it was going too fast towards the great city, and backed water, and lay still.

By degrees the day wore away, and Tom sculled up leisurely with the stream, as if he had at last settled in his mind what he would do. It fell dusk as he passed through the pool. Here were, as usual, many vessels from foreign countries, and among them was one from Australia. Tom pulled up under the quarter of this, where other boats were lying, and going on board, sought out the captain, and asked if he wanted a good hand or two. The captain replying that he would be glad of a good hand, Tom offered himself, to work his passage out to Melbourne.

The Captain accepted this offer, as Tom was an athletic young fellow, and had a sailor look about him ; and so it was settled that he should come on board that night. The ship was to sail in a day or two. Having arranged this matter, Tom went on up the stream. By this time it was dark. But Tom knew the river, and he continued to scull leisurely up, the lights on the shore, on the bridges, and on the vessels, shining out one by one as he went through London Bridge. Presently he was in the water near the wharf where lay the " Columbine."

CHAPTER III.

SUSAN wrote a letter to Frank on the Sunday night, after reading the inquest, and sent it off on the Monday. After she had sent it she thought over all the circumstances of the case. She was but a young girl,—only seventeen years of age,—and this was the first serious trouble that had come upon her. Her life hitherto had been easy and simple; a little schooling, a short service, a life with her father on board the barge, always cared for, and without a difficulty to contend against. Now she suddenly found herself launched into a position which demanded prudence and forethought and self-examination. She had only had

her father to really care for of late, her mother having died in her absence, and Tom. Tom had become, from a year or more of frequent, though not constant, companionship—for he had at times been away from the barge for a month or two at a time with his uncle—familiar to her. Their acquaintance had thus been of long standing in the young life of Susan, and she had come almost by habit to like him. Tom had expressed, from time to time, an undisguised admiration and regard for Susan, and the young girl would have been more or less than a young girl if she had been insensible to the words and neighbourhood of a good-looking, powerful, assured young fellow who was frequently at hand to do her any little act of kindness, and who showed, by his manner and his language, his admiration of her. So Tom liked Susan very much, and Susan liked Tom just a little.

But suddenly there came a new figure on the scene of her life. An act of singular forgetfulness of self, and of sympathetic warmth of heart—an act, in the girl's eyes, of chivalrous daring—is done by a young man, in a manner for her. Quite unknown to him, and utterly ignorant of him, beyond a casual mention of his name as belonging to The Wick, by her father, as the barge passed up and down the river, his act had benefited her, and had touched the most sensitive part of her nature. From that moment this unknown figure had affected her imagination. She had heard his voice on that dark evening on the water, and she had been aware of a presence, as he had placed the rescued animal in her hands, and had afterwards pulled the boat to the bank. She had recognized the voice at once at the wharf when Frank had stood in the doorway of the warehouse with Mr. Charles,

and had then seen the doer of the act; and the person and bearing of Frank were such as a young girl would scarcely look at at any time with utter indifference. Under the circumstances, it would have been singular if Susan had not experienced a certain pleasure in connecting the person before her with the act of that evening on the river. Then came the appearance of Frank again a few days after at Southwark, and his warning to her as to what had happened at the creek. She could not mistake the kindness of his coming; and she could not be insensible to the general tone of address, and a certain gentleness of manner, both novel to her. Somehow Susan could not help thinking of all this—it is true, in a vague sort of way—but still there was a new sensation in her being, as she felt how this novel figure had suddenly entered into her life, and taken a place in

it. It was perhaps wrong of Susan, according to certain social principles, to let Frank occupy so much of her thoughts as he did; but then it must be considered that she could not help it, as he now had taken, by some circumstances beyond her doing or wish, a place of reality in her life; and so the social principles had to submit to necessity. Something had grown up round her, and she found herself an actor in it, whether she would or not; and this new element was in it too, and, moreover, was occupying a very prominent position in it. How could Susan do otherwise than let her thoughts dwell on Frank? And then the consequence of all this was very serious, for, in spite of herself, she could not help a comparison between Frank and Tom creeping in among these thoughts. Tom's rough manners and rude language generally, and his foolish and wild way of speaking of things,

seemed all to strike her as they had never struck her before. It was unlucky for Tom, but so it was. Susan was but young, and her companionship with Tom was a habit. An incipient liking for his admiration and his attentions to her would probably, and as a matter of course, by degrees have gone on to something more, if not interrupted. Time and opportunity and neighbourhood work out many of our social arrangements which have not been the result of any spontaneous wish or impulse on the part of those concerned. But in this case time and opportunity were interrupted. A new figure crossed the march of events and of ideas, and broke in upon them and diverted them from their course.

Susan was sitting, on that Monday evening, in her little cabin home. It was a very small place, but it was the neatest of diminutive homes. It was growing dark,

and she sat by her little stove-fire, and worked till she could no longer see her needle. Her mind was occupied with the peculiar position of Tom. Where was he? Why did he stay away so long? Had he really done this cruel deed? It became quite dark. Presently she felt the bump of a boat against the barge, and then heard a step, as some one leaped down into the little court and approached the door. She recognised the step as Tom's. She jumped up and opened the door.

"Tom, have you seen father?" were Susan's first words. Tom did not answer, but he walked in, abruptly shut the door behind him, and then seated himself by the fire.

"Susan," he now said, in an earnest and serious manner, " you have heerd all about this bisness."

"Yes," said Susan, "it was all in the newspaper."

"Now, mind, 'tis a lie, all of it," said Tom, fiercely.

"Tom, I am sure it is not true that you killed the young man."

"Why, how in the devil's name could I ha' done it?"

"Tom, don't talk in that dreadful manner, when it is about this business, too," said Susan, severely.

"There now, don't you be hard on me, there's plenty is hard on me without you. D'ye see, I never set eyes on this man, young Tapps. I never heerd his name, or knowed anything about him."

"I can't understand it at all," said Susan.

"Understand it, Susan!—why, what is there to understand in it? I tell ye that I never set eyes on this Tapps, and therefore how can I ha' got anything to do with this? 'Tis

very well for people at the 'quest to make up a cock-and-bull story about the barge being off the osiers all that arternoon, and a boat going up and down. In corse it's true as we did lay off the osiers that arternoon, when Sangster come and stopped the leak, but what then?—what have that got to do with young Tapps? And I could ha' told 'em as I went up the creek and killed they rats, and you seed the rats with your own eyes; and then we dropped down to Putney —what can they make out o' that?"

"Tom," said Susan, looking straight into his face with her serious eyes, "I won't believe you did this, I won't, but——"

She hesitated, and Tom's eyes dropped under her gaze; then he looked up fiercely at her, "Come, out with it!"

"Tom, did you go anywhere besides up the creek? Did you see young Mr. Morrice that evening?" For Susan had been

thinking over the words of Frank when he came to give her that warning, and also of Tom's scared look when he heard of his coming. After a moment's consideration, he said,

"Yes, I did see that 'ere swell, and I hate him ; but what have that to do wi' young Tapps ?"

"Did you speak to him ?" said Susan.

"No, I didn't," replied Tom, sulkily.

"Did he see you ?"

"Now, look ye here, Susan ; that swell and me, we has a quarrel—never you mind about what, but we has—he and me, we didn't have no words that evening, but we might ha' had."

Susan was puzzled, and held her tongue. If no words passed between Tom and Frank on that afternoon, why was Tom scared at Frank's coming and his warning ?

"And if we had, what then ?" he con-

tinued; "what's all this got to do wi' young Tapps?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Tom, how it all is. I can't make it out. You haven't seen father?" said Susan, in a tone of bewilderment.

"No, have he got anything pertikler to say to me?"

"Tom, the constable has been here this morning from Kew, and there's a summons for father and you to go to the inquest on Thursday."

"Ay, I see in the paper there was to be another 'quest; your father can go to it, Susan—I shan't."

"Not go to it?" said Susan, surprised.

"No, I shan't. I'm not going to be badgered with they fellers asking me questions—what ha' they got to do with me?"

Susan kept her head bent down, but she felt a slight colour come up upon her cheek.

"If you are innocent, Tom, why don't you go?"

"I tell ye I shan't go, Susan," said Tom, doggedly. "I never seed that young Tapps —then what have I got to do with it?"

"What will father think?" inquired Susan, with a flush upon her face.

"Look ye, Susan, your father wants me to leave the barge. I know that—for why did I go down to uncle's? Very well; he've been a long time wanting this—then I'll go—he don't want me—then why am I to stop and go to this tarnation 'quest, to be badgered with asking me all about this bisness, and I knowing no more about it than the dead—and that young swell there, in corse. I won't go to be badgered by him nor any of 'em."

"Father never said anything to me about your going away," said Susan, quietly.

"Maybe not. But he don't like me—

that's the truth on it, Susan; he's agin me, as everybody's agin me; and in corse you'll turn agin me too."

Susan did not notice these words.

"If you go away now, Tom, before this inquest, father won't be pleased."

"Maybe he won't; but he don't want me; and then, when I've been badgered up there by they swells, he won't want me any the more, so I'll just go at onst."

"I am sorry you should go in this way," said Susan, kindly. "I am sure father will be hurt. He has been a good friend to you, Tom—you can't say he hasn't."

"Be you sorry I'm a-going, Susan?" said Tom, leaning towards her, and his voice softening.

"Yes, Tom," she answered frankly. "You and I have been here in the barge a long time, and I shall be sorry when you are gone."

"Susan, shall you wish me back again?"

She hesitated.

"Tom, I don't wish you to be back again here for you to go on in your old way, grumbling about everybody. Father has often told you it is foolish—you ought to do better. I have heard father say you can do anything you like to put your hand to."

"Then you don't wish me to come back again aboard the barge, Susan?" said Tom, in a vexed tone.

"I wish you to be better than aboard the barge," said Susan kindly.

"Better—how better? P'raps you'd like me to be one o' they swells?" said Tom, his manner becoming suddenly abrupt and rude.

Susan bent her head down, and said quietly—"It would be better if you didn't let yourself talk in that foolish way."

"Well, good-bye, Susan. I shan't never forget you. I don't mind saying as I likes you best of any girl I ever see; and 'tain't the first time as I've said so. When I be gone I'd hope you'd sometimes think on me." He spoke tenderly.

"Good-bye, Tom," said Susan, putting out her hand. "You have been kind to me very often, and I shall remember that always."

Tom held her hand for a minute, and stood in an irresolute way, as if loth to go, and yet impelled to leave her; and then he opened the door, and, crossing the little court, stepped quickly over the side into his boat, and was in a moment pulling it with strong, even strokes against the stream, in the direction of the pool and the vessel for Australia.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the Tuesday morning, three days after the inquest, Mr. Morrice and Frank were at breakfast. Parkins brought in the letters. Among these was one for Mr. Morrice, with the postmark of St. Albans on it, and one for Frank bore that of London only. Frank did not seem to recognise the handwriting of his letter, and so he did as men often do, turned the letter about, and guessed at the writer. The elder man, after a time, broke his seal, and looked at the date. "From Woodbury—my Lady Underside!" he exclaimed. "Of course she has heard all about this affair and the inquest from the papers, and now she writes

to me. Very curious in the matter, of course, being a woman, and acting up to the genius of her sex in sending me a letter of inquiries—and a pretty long one, too; and, therefore, she counts on a long one in reply—calculating Lady Underside!"

Frank glanced at his letter, and put it in his pocket without a word, and went on with his breakfast.

The letter to Mr. Morrice ran thus:—

"Woodbury, November 24th, 18—.

"My dear Mr. Morrice,

"I am sure you must be expecting this letter from me about this terrible affair which has occurred close to you—on your very ground. We have been reading all about it and the inquest in the newspaper. How very dreadful it all is, and what a very shocking thing to take place at your very door! I have often said to Sir Charles I should never like to live

on the banks of the Thames—that is, unless it was for a month or two in the summer in a villa near Richmond or Twickenham—it is so very dangerous. Your place is beautiful, and I dare say you and Frank are become accustomed to it; but I confess I should not like those barges and boats always coming up and down at all hours of the night, and such bad people as there are on some of those barges, and such temptation to them to stop and come into your premises and steal your fruit, as I heard Frank say they do very often; and then, if they can do that, and get away on their barges so easily, they might come and rob your house any night, and go off in the same manner. And now here comes this terrible murder, down under that lonely wall. I know it so well, and so do the girls, and they say it is exactly the place for a horrible crime. Poor young man!—it

does seem so extraordinary that no one should have any clue to the horrid wretch who did it—not a mark, not a thing left behind him! Of course the people in that barge did it, and I do hope that man in the boat will be found—I mean the man who was taken up to the Strand and left there. Of course he would know about it—at least, about those who did it. If it should turn out that it was the other man, who went back to the barge, did it, what a very curious coincidence it will be that the poor young man should have been standing on the bank, and watching him coming down in the boat, who was in a little time to cause his death! I wonder if he had any presentiment about it? It would be so very curious if he had. What a very ridiculous woman that Mrs. Codling was to say those things about your horses and Frank's. I daresay she believed all she was saying was

true ; and this makes me think how very little really that class of persons knows about us—they make such wonderful mistakes about what we say and do. I must say we all think it was so right of you and Frank to have the poor young man carried up to the house till the friends came to take him home. You should have seen the faces of Marion and Anna when they read all that Mrs. Codling said about Frank's horses. They tried to look grave because it was the inquest, and then the extravagance of the woman made it all so absurd. It was as good as a comedy to see them. Are people allowed at an inquest to say everything that comes into their heads? It seems so odd they shouldn't be serious then, with the body lying in the next room. But then perhaps she didn't mean to be absurd. I suppose you won't come down for Christmas to see us—you and Frank? Sir Charles

desires me to say, and I say for myself and the girls, we shall all be so happy if you would. It would be so very pleasant. We would have nice people to meet you; and Frank could have plenty of hunting; and Sir Charles said he would keep one of his best pheasant coverts untouched. Frank could bring his horses, of course—those dreadful horses that Mrs. Codling said such things about. We should look at them with an additional interest. Anna reminds me that Mungo was very ill-behaved here about Captain Wynckly; so Mrs. Codling was partly right, though she did call him Monkey instead of Mungo. Please come. If you will, I promise you and Sir Charles shall have as much talk as you like about Republics and Monarchies, and no Lady Ashford to impose any limits or conditions. Anna tells me to ask particularly for Lady Anna, the beauty. Of course I did not

mean that any one would be really afraid to live at The Wick because of the river and the robbers. Besides, a good wife always likes to live where her husband wishes to live; and I am sure any woman would be happy and proud to live in such a charming place. Sir Charles and the girls join me in all kind wishes.

"Yours very sincerely,

"F. UNDERSIDE."

"P.S.—We are all looking forward to the adjourned inquest on the poor young man. I do hope something will come out about the horrid wretch."

When Mr. Morrice had finished reading his letter, he put it in his pocket, merely saying to himself, "No, no, my dear lady, I never go away from home at Christmas—not even a talk with Sir Charles on Republics will tempt me. However, I must write

to her. I suspect the watchword of the whole letter to be—Anna. Well, it is natural; but Frank is a funny fellow, and has his own notions about things."

Frank, in the meanwhile, had gone off to his own room, and read the following:—

"On board the 'Columbine,' at Union Wharf, Southwark, Sunday night.

"SIR—I am taking a liberty in writing to you but I hope you will forgive it. The newspaper has told all about what happened and father and I have read the inquest and now I know all that you meant when you came here and would not tell me what it was. It was very kind in you not to tell me and I thank you with all my heart for your kindness in giving me the warning for Tom. I did as you told me and he was scared. I could not make it out at all why he was so scared but now I know or I think I do. Oh! Tom—what could he have

against that young man? But did he do it sir? I don't think he knew that young man at all. I never heard him say his name—never—and when I have been thinking of it since Tom's manner though he was scared as I said it was not as if he had killed a man. Of course I don't know but I never can think that Tom would look like that though he was very angry and very strange in his ways if he had done such a dreadful crime. He would go on saying he could not understand it. What could he mean by saying that. I never can think he intended to kill that poor young man who as I said he did not know. However I thank you sir all the same and always shall whatever happens. Tom went off the next day after you came and he said he had some business for father down the river and he has not been back since. Father is in a

great trouble about it all I can see though I have never told him of your coming. For he must know it was the Columbine lying by the osiers that afternoon for ever so long and that it was Tom who was in the boat coming down from Sangster's but he has never said a word to me about it. You will believe me I am certain father knew no more than anybody what Tom did when he was away with the boat that afternoon except killing the rats in the creek. The paper says there is to be another inquest but nobody has been here to tell us of it and I suppose father won't have to go to it except he is summoned. I hope you will not think me taking a very great liberty sir if I say that perhaps if you don't go to the inquest and Sangster didn't go there would be nobody to know it was our barge. Anyhow you will please sir to accept my kind thanks

for all you have done in this misfortune, and I am sir

"Your humble and grateful servant

"SUSAN HARDING."

Frank sat there for some time ruminating over Susan's letter. He was glad to have it, and he spelt it all over again carefully. The handwriting was neat, and the style of the letter was simple and homely, but it was not vulgar. "I am afraid," he said to himself, "that Susan likes Tom. They have been shut up in that barge together for weeks, and it is only natural. She's a steady girl, I'll be bound, with those pretty serious eyes, that look straight at you, and that Tom is a bit of a ruffian, wild, passionate, revengeful, and he'd break her heart in a year if she was to marry him; but then that is only in the natural course of things. He is not ill-looking, and he's an athletic beast; just the

kind of fellow that steady girls do take a liking to often enough. Well, I am glad anyhow that I went down and warned them of this. So Tom is off—that's right; then of course it was he who killed poor Bob; but how, and why? That is so strange. She says he was scared when he had my message, and yet she thinks he did not kill Bob. I'm sure Susan wouldn't say that just to excuse Tom. She is a truthful girl, one can see it in her face, and she must have seen something in his face which made her say that. What could he not understand? Perhaps it is that which makes her doubt. Why should he kill a man he did not know? That is a very cogent argument; but then did he by some chance know Bob, and have a grievance against him? That Tom is a savage fellow, as I know. Then comes that query into my mind, did he kill Bob by mistake—by mistake for your humble

servant, Miss Susan? If that is the case, he might well be scared at my appearance to give him a warning; and this may be what he cannot understand. Probably not, Mr. Tom; anyhow he, or somebody, killed a man, though perhaps one man instead of another, and he may find himself in a difficulty if they catch him. Susan counts without her host if she imagines old Sangster will not be at the next inquest, for I understand the constable was with him yesterday morning. Nobody outside these walls knows of my being so much acquainted with the 'Columbine,' and so no one will think I have anything to do with the matter, or know anything of it, beyond what everybody else knows, so I shall keep away if I can, of course; but it is quite probable —indeed certain—that Harding will be summoned, and Tom too, after the Coroner hears what the constable learns from Sangs-

ter." So Frank put up Susan's letter with the remark, "that there were not quite as many stops in it as there might be, but then many girls, even ladies, knew nothing about stops." He intended answering it in the course of the day.

In the afternoon Frank wrote the following letter:—

"The Wick, Tuesday.

"DEAR SUSAN,

"I have your letter and am glad to think I may have been of any service in my scull down from here in putting you on your guard, and Mr. Tom too. Now you know what I meant; but I don't like to think Tom did it. Your reason why he should not have done it is a good reason, that he did not know young Tapps. Why should he injure a man he did not know, and who did not know him? All this is possible; but honestly I don't understand

Tom being scared when you told him of my coming, unless he knew something; and then going away. Why should he go away? However, I will not condemn anyone. I am afraid your father will hear of this from the Coroner, as the constable was at Sangster's yesterday evening. You may be sure I shall not appear if I can avoid doing so, and as no one outside these gates knows, or is likely to know, anything of my acquaintance with the 'Columbine,' it is not probable that I shall be called on to appear on the next inquest. Tom had better keep away. Of course I am quite sure your father knew nothing whatever of what Tom was doing when away from the barge that afternoon, except killing the rats. To a man like your father the thought that the 'Columbine' is in any way connected with this horrid affair must be a shocking thing. I can understand your not liking to mention

my coming to your father before you read the paper, as it would have made him think worse of Tom in this than perhaps he deserves. I think now you had better not tell him of it until after the inquest, for the same reason. Good-bye, Susan. I sincerely hope no trouble will come to you from this, or to your father.

"Truly yours,

"F. MORRICE."

The following is the answer of Mr. Morrice to Lady Underside:—

"The Wick, November 25th, 18—.

"MY DEAR LADY UNDERSIDE,

"The event which you allude to in your letter, the death of young Robert Tapps under such very strange, and, at the same time, horrible circumstances, has been a most painful one to me. I am concerned beyond measure, for the father

and mother I have a respect for as honest and highly respectable people, and their poor unfortunate son was in every way steady and well-disposed. That anyone should have a cause for such savage anger against him, as this act denotes, is an enigma, for it is evident plunder was not the object, as his watch and purse were found on him. From what I hear this afternoon there seems a possible clue has been discovered ; but as it is only a suspicion, and involves respectable people, I will say nothing more at present. The adjourned inquest may disclose something.

"You quiz Mrs. Codling. I know her well—a kind creature, but a little imaginative. I like imaginative women. My dear lady, do not ask me to like a dull, unimaginative woman.

"You must not expect me or Frank at Christmas. I always make a point of being

at home at that season, among my own people. They expect it, and so I cannot disappoint them; and, besides, I like, as I am sure you and Sir Charles do, to keep up the old customs and habits of our social life. And the observance of times and seasons is, in my eyes, one of the happiest and most binding of the laws which have come down to us from those who have helped to form our social polity. I feel a confidence that in this I shall have your approval. These are our landmarks—our social epochs—our moral finger-posts. Without them we should lose our road and wander into the waste. You see what a Tory I am—that is, how I keep in the old ways. You remember Charles Lamb talks in his hearty way of 'the sacred observance of any old Institution,' and adds, 'My household gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood.' Elia is among

my very dear friends in my library, and how could I embrace him, as I do in my heart, and sip sweet wisdom from him, if I go off from home and him at Christmas, and turn my back on the 'old institution?' Besides which, I am a hard stickler for habits. A friend of Coleridge, a famous writer on the use and value of habits—'habits,' he says, 'beside which *nothing* is a sufficiently prompt and effectual course of action in human nature.'

"Habits are always ready at hand for instant use in emergencies, while cold calculating reason lags a long way behind. What poor helpless creatures we should be without habits! So you see I stand up for these, as sheet anchors for weak humanity otherwise at sea. You remember the story of the great philosopher, one of those grand thinkers, telling his audience at a lecture that these things were of no use to the

strong—only fit for the weak; and then on his way home from his lecture, he fell into a trouble and got his poor intellectual crown cracked—for want of observing a habit, good man. So I have a dear old habit of staying at home at Christmas, and observing the sacred uses of a festival for my household belongings, among my rules for happiness. 'Feelings are the founders of habits,' some wise man wrote; and if not in feelings, where do we find our happiness? There's a sermon for you, dear lady! I suspect I am getting among the elders, and am taking to preaching. However, you can consider all the latter part of this letter as intended for Sir Charles.

"Now Frank is not quite addicted to habits as I am, and I send you a proof of it. Here is his last quip. Now and then he performs these little rebel capers against times and seasons, forms and rules. He

tells me he made these lines in his bed yesterday morning. They are his excuses for being late at breakfast:—

'If Father Thames is up
With tidings here from town?
He's always tiding up,
Except when ebbing down.
But he's no law to me
In reason or in rhyme;
Let tides obey the hours—
I am not *tied to* time.

'Suppose the morning star
Gets up and shines so bright?
I'm not a ruling star,
Nor yet a lesser light.
To see great Lucifer
I slowly turn my head—
Why! he's put his candle out,
And is gone again to bed.'

"You see, Frank is a laughing philosopher. Which do you prefer, Frank's unruliness or my order? I think I can guess which side your young ladies will take—his, of course. Is not the natural lawlessness of young women, in their thoughts, a proof of the truth of Eve's story? How she did

like forbidden fruit! Please to believe that I think all kind things of your daughters notwithstanding, and request you and Sir Charles to accept the affectionate regards of

"Yours sincerely,

"W. MORRICE."

CHAPTER V.

WHEN it was told to Mr. Charles, on the morning appointed for the adjourned inquest, that Tom had not returned, and was not forthcoming, he was very much annoyed. Harding communicated to him this piece of intelligence, and Mr. Charles expressed himself angrily on the subject. He did not reproach Harding with it, nor did he insinuate in any way that Harding had caused this very awkward absenting of himself by the young man; but still the bargeman felt, by the tone of voice, that he was in a degree blamed. He defended himself with honest warmth from any such charge—which was not made—and declared,

which was true, that he was as much vexed at the absence of Tom as was Mr. Charles. He felt that this act of Tom's reflected on the barge, and so on the firm of its owners; and thus they were both equally angry at this dereliction. It looked so like a confession of crime. Harding had so tried to convince himself that it could not be possible that Tom could have committed such an act, and he had hoped for a bold and open denial of it; and instead of this, he had absconded. Still, he would not believe in Tom's guilt. "How could he have done it?—he did not know the man." This was the burden of his reasoning on it.

Mr. Charles, too, had little doubt on the matter. He could not think of such an inexplicable crime being committed by a young man who was on board one of his vessels. He knew Tom was wild, and not wise, but he never for a moment thought

him criminal. "It never entered his head," as he said now to Harding, "to think it possible, with such a man as Harding on board, that the young fellow could have fostered such a savage disposition; and therefore he could not believe he had done it. But now, when he had the opportunity of rebutting such a charge, and declaring his innocence, Tom had fled from it." So they were both much disturbed. Therefore, Harding must go alone to the inquest, and explain as well as he could the absence of Tom. There was even in this absence nothing positive against Tom. He had been sent by Harding to his uncle's house, and had not returned. An accident might have detained him.

At the time appointed, twelve o'clock, the Coroner was again at the "Three Crowns" on Kew Green, and the jury were assembled. The usual formalities being gone through,

the clerk said that a man, John Sangster, was in attendance. The old boat-builder was admitted—an elderly man of sturdy figure, with lined and weather-beaten face, but of honest countenance. On being asked if he had known the deceased, Robert Tapps, he said he didn't know quite for certain that he had ever known the young man; he had heard tell of his father, Mr. Tapps, of the "Three Crowns," and he had heard that he had a son, and he had heard say that young Robert Tapps was now and again at The Wick. When he was asked if he knew Thomas Plank, Sangster at once replied that he knew him by the name of Tom, a young sailor, belonging to the barge called the "Columbine."

"When did you see him last?" said the Coroner. "Please to tell the jury what you know of the young man."

"It was o' Wednesday in last week," said

Sangster, "at about two o'clock in the day, or it might be half an hour arter, as the young man Tom came up to my little place in a boat, and said as the 'Columbine' barge had started a plank, or something o' that kind, and was a-laying off the osiers down by the creek; and Mr. Harding, the master, wished me to go down with him and stop the leak. So I takes my tools in a bag and some tow, and I goes with him in the boat. I found the barge at anchor jest above the creek; and I stopped the leak, and I stopped aboard a little along o' Mr. Harding, and then Tom sculls me back home again in the boat, and then he goes off down stream to the barge. When I left the barge it was arter three, seeing we heerd the Mortlake clock strike three whiles I were aboard."

In reply to a juryman, Sangster said he saw nothing particular about any person on

board. This was all the bargeman had to say. The Coroner and the clerk spoke together for a short time in a low tone, and then Sangster was told to wait outside, and not to go home, as he might be wanted again.

The clerk then inquired if Harding, the master of the barge, was in attendance, but was told that he had not yet come. Was there any one else in waiting who could give any information? The constable said there was a man who lived at Mortlake who had something to say—a baker. He was told to admit him.

The room in which the Coroner was sitting was an upstairs room; and a considerable delay took place before the Mortlake man entered, and there seemed to be some difficulty in his arriving at all. The fact was, Humpy, the baker, was a man of about five-and-twenty stone weight, and he had some

trouble in getting up the stairs, his feet being gouty. Mr. Humpy at last entered the room, his huge bulk filling up the narrow door as he pushed himself through it. He was lightly clothed, for he had on only a short, round, light-coloured cloth jacket and trowsers, and his enormous throat was all open, with the exception of the shirt-collar, which was tightly buttoned round it. He appeared to be bursting out of everything. His great cheeks fell out over the collar, while a pair of small grey eyes twinkled with a bright but unsteady light from the middle of his huge, sallow face. He was about forty years of age

On entering the room, Humpy said at once, in a gaspy voice, "Please to excuse me, gentlemen, for being so long a-coming, but I bain't a boy, and I bain't so active as I were."

"Take a chair, Mr. Humpy," said the

Coroner. "I'm sure you will find it easier sitting than standing."

"I do, sir," said the baker; "and I sits at home considerable along o' mother."

"Can you tell the jury anything about the death of Robert Tapps?" said the Coroner. "Did you know Robert Tapps?"

"Yes, sir, I knowed Robert Tapps, because I have a-seed him at Mrs. Codling's," said the baker. "Mother and me, we lives not fur from Mrs. Codling; and I knows Mrs. Codling."

"When did you see Robert Tapps last?" said the Coroner. "Be kind enough to tell the jury."

"It was the middle of last week—a Wednesday; and I were a-going to take a walk along the tow, and I says to mother, says I—I always tells mother where I be going—and I says I be going for a bit up the tow. I don't walk so light as I did, d'ye see,

though mother always says I was heavy when she nussed me, and I'd got as fur up the tow as the second willer as grows there alongside the path, and there be a big root, and I sits down a-top o' this root—I likes sitting on this here root—for why?—'cause in the summer evenings I sits there, and I hears the nightandgales a-singing over in the gardings behind; so whiles I were a-sitting there, I sees Mr. Bob a-coming—mother and I always called him Mr. Bob, 'cause we heerd Mrs. Codling call him Bob—and so I see him coming along the tow—it were about half an' arter two, or maybe three, or thereaways—and he says to me, 'Good day, Humpy,' quite pleasant; 'bad-dish going on these stones,' says he; for he see as I were groggy on my pins, ye may say, and the tow is all gravel stones; and I says, says I, 'So 'tis for a man as ain't fond of stones in his shoes.' 'Those bothering

tow horses keeps it rough,' says he. 'They does,' says I; 'plaguy rough for them as favors corn-flour afore flints in their stockings.' So he larfs a bit, and he says, 'Hope your mother's hearty, Humpy?' And I says, 'She be; and if you wants a captain, you'll find her at home; and,' says I, 'what a blessing it is as a man can eat a captain, for mother says my teeth was always crumbly teeth, and they would go a-crumbling down along o' my dinner; and there ain't no good comes o' dining on teeth; and when they be all swallered, what 'ave you got left for captains, Mr. Robert?' And then he larfed again a bit, and walked on along the tow."

The baker said all this in a mournful and gasping voice, and with a serious face.

"Did you see anything else that day?" said the Coroner, in a bland voice, while, in spite of himself, a smile passed over his face.

"Yes, I see a barge; and I were a-sitting on that root of the willer—it were up a goodish way, nigh the creek; and I was a-thinking I knowed the barge, 'cause I'd seed it pass up many's the time; and I was aboard a barge myself when I were a boy, though mother always says as I was heavy from the time o' nussing, and not good for sailoring; and I said to myself as I knowed the barge, as far off as she were."

"Did you know the name of that barge?" said one of the jury.

"Yes, I did, it were 'Columbine,' and I marked her, 'cause of her build, and 'cause she allays looked as if she'd had a dab o' fresh paint on her afore she come out o' London."

"Did you see Robert Tapps after this?" inquired a juryman.

"Yes," said the baker, "I see him again when he come down the bank at dusk. I says to mother, there be Mr. Bob a-going

over the water. Whatever can he be a-going there for? And I heerd him say as he should go home by the creek and Wick. 'Tis a wonder,' says mother, 'what he can see a-pleasuring a-goin' along by they wet osiers, and it a-getting dark, a-hearing they frogs a-croaking.' 'There ain't no counting for likings,' says I. 'There be them as favours sitting atop o' willer roots a-filling their minds wi' nightandgales; and then there be them, maybe, as has a mind to croakers, and goes a-pleasuring a-sitting atop o' the mud, a-filling theirselves wi' croakers. They ain't reglar like—some is for muffins and some for crumpets,—people ain't reglar,' I says to mother. 'Tis wonderful,' says mother, ''tis just as if natur didn't leave out nothing,—them as likes nightandgales, and them as likes croakers.'"

"Was there a pretty good light?" said a juryman, seeing the baker's odd story coming

to a halt, and bringing him back from the world of fancy to the region of fact.

"I seed Mr. Bob as plain as I sees your nose, Mister," said the baker, "and so did mother; but out on the water it were a-getting thick; but it warn't a fog, and we seed the boat pretty nigh right across; and arter a time it come back without Mr. Bob, and mother and me we says he be gone home by Wick and the creek."

This was all the evidence the portly baker had to communicate, which did not add anything new to what was known before; and then he was helped out of his chair, and squeezed through the narrow doorway, and supported down the creaking and groaning stairs.

The Coroner was now told that the master of the barge, Joseph Harding, had arrived, and was waiting. So Harding was admitted into the room. His entrance created a con-

siderable stir among those present. On the Coroner asking him if he had brought the young man, Thomas Plank, with him, Harding related what had occurred. His handsome face, and open expression of countenance, and tall figure, made a favourable impression on the Coroner and on the jury; and so, when he explained the cause of Tom's absence, his own sending him away from the barge to his uncle at Greenwich, on family matters, at a time when he himself knew nothing whatever of the death of Robert Tapps, his manner and appearance made all believe his story. Then he related the circumstances of that Wednesday with great minuteness, from the time of the "Columbine" leaving Brentford, the stopping by the creek for Sangster, Tom's going for him in the boat, and taking him back home again, and then Tom's taking the boat, with his permission, to kill rats in the creek, and

Tom's return; and then the barge dropping down to Putney at the tail of the tide, according to orders. He was a good deal questioned by various jurymen, but his story agreed precisely with that told by Sangster, and those of Mrs. Codling and the baker, as to time, and place, and circumstance. He was questioned as to Tom's manner and language after his return from the creek with the rats; and he related Tom's usual manner of talking, as he had done to Mr. Charles at the wharf, which had a bad effect on the jury. They looked very grave at this, and there was some whispering among them. This closed the evidence. At the termination of Harding's statements there was clearly no ground of suspicion that he knew anything whatever of the murder of Robert Tapps.

The Coroner was at first disposed to adjourn the inquest again, so as to have Tom

before him before a verdict was called for; but the clerk suggested, in a whisper, that there was a possibility that the young man had kept purposely out of the way, and that he would take good care to keep in hiding till after any number of adjournments, and thus they would be no nearer their object.

The Coroner now went over the evidence given at the former inquest, and also that produced on this day, summing up the different accounts to the jury. "He expressed a strong dissatisfaction at the non-appearance of Thomas Plank, though there was nothing in the evidence that could be said positively to connect him with the transaction. It was proved that the young man, Thomas Plank, was on board the 'Columbine' that afternoon, that he left the barge in the boat belonging to it before three o'clock, and had brought down a man named Sangster to stop the leak; and that

he had taken Sangster back again to his house after the leak had been stopped; that he had again left the barge in the boat about, or soon after, four o'clock, for the ostensible purpose of killing rats, which were known to abound in the creek near which the barge was lying; that he was absent for some time; that it was getting dark when he left the barge, which was the best time for killing those animals; and that it was dark, or about five o'clock, when he returned; and that thus he was absent from the barge, and ostensibly in the creek, during the time when Robert Tapps would pass along the pathway by the head of the creek; and that he returned on board after this time had passed away, saying he had been up in the creek, and had killed some rats—five or six; and he produced the dead rats in evidence of this. It was declared that after his return on board he had

shown no particular marks of agitation, such as would be likely to affect a young man after committing such a crime, though he had indulged in some strong and even violent expressions, directed against persons of a class of society superior to his own; but this was declared to be habitual with him, as it is unfortunately so with other foolish young men who have the desire to be more than they are, without the habits of industry which would raise them from a lower to a higher place in the social scale. It was shewn by the elder Tapps, the father of the deceased, that he believed his son had no acquaintance whatever with the young man, Thomas Plank, or knew of the barge, or anything connected with it; and it was declared by the master of the barge, Harding, that he was convinced the young man, Thomas Plank, had no knowledge whatever of the deceased. The body, when

found, had not been abused or robbed, shewing that robbery had not been the object of the murderer. It was unlikely that one man should kill another who was a total stranger, and against whom he could have no grudge whatever. There was something strange and unaccountable in the transaction, looked at in the ordinary light of human reasoning—that no such crime is committed without a very powerful and sufficient ground; and here there appears to have been no ground whatever. The absence of the young man, Thomas Plank, from this inquiry, was unfavourable to him; but his absence had been accounted for in a great degree without further evidence." The Coroner left it to the jury to decide what verdict they would give. After half an hour's consultation in an adjoining room, the jury agreed in a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons un-

known;" accompanying it with an expression of regret that Thomas Plank was not forthcoming. The Coroner quietly directed the constable to search for Thomas Plank, and gave him a warrant to bring him up before the nearest magistrate whenever and wherever he might find him.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK absented himself purposely from The Wick for a couple of days previous to the adjourned inquest, and went to London, so that he should escape the chance of a summons to Kew. On the afternoon of that day he was riding down home to The Wick, when, near Hammersmith, he met a light cart, in which was Harding, with a friend, on his way back from the inquest to Southwark. Of course Frank stopped him to ask what had taken place. Harding gave him a short summary of it, and told him of the verdict; also of the observations as to Tom by the foreman of the jury, and by the Coroner. Frank made no other remark on

this than that he was quite sure, and had been so all along, that Harding had no kind of knowledge whatever of the matter, and that he hoped Tom would be able to clear himself whenever he turned up. He made no inquiry whatever about him, having a lurking suspicion in his mind that Tom was out of the way purposely. However, he said nothing to lead Harding to suppose that he suspected him.

Harding looked puzzled, and thoroughly uncomfortable, his handsome bronzed face very serious. The trouble that was in his mind showed itself plainly in his usually frank and undisturbed countenance. The mere fact of a question of this kind concerning his vessel—a kind of a suspicion thrown upon his barge—was a serious thing, quite a misfortune, to a man of his honest and unsuspecting and downright nature. A trouble had come upon him, and he could not see

his way into the facts of it. Unsuspicious himself, he would not suspect Tom—could not conceive it possible that this young man under his own eyes could have had any hand in such a crime. And yet Tom had been absent from the barge that afternoon, and had been up that creek at the very time when the crime was believed, and almost proved, to have been committed ; and he was absent now much longer than he should have been if he had only employed himself in transacting the business at Greenwich which he had sent Tom to do. He had sent to Greenwich to inquire for Tom, and no one knew anything of him. So Harding was thoroughly puzzled and unhappy when he met Frank at Hammersmith, and he showed it in his face.

Frank now judged, from Harding's silence on the subject, that he was quite unaware of his visit to the barge to give that warning

for Tom, and also of the letters between Susan and himself. It was apparent to Frank that Susan was sparing her father all the pain of her suspicions about Tom, so he, Frank, would do the same. He had, moreover, recommended this in his letter to her.

On the following morning Mr. Morrice and Frank were at breakfast. "Here's an account of the adjourned inquest," said the elder man, with his head buried in the paper—"satisfactory as regards the master of the barge, Harding, who seems to be a straightforward sort of man, but unsatisfactory as respects that young man, Thomas Plank."

"I read it all before you came down, Dad. I don't believe that Harding knows anything of Tom's absence beyond what he said."

"Perhaps not—I should hope not."

"I met him yesterday as I came down from London and spoke to him. He was on his way back from Kew, and I'd lay my life he knew nothing whatever beyond what he said on the inquest."

"Perhaps his daughter did," said Mr. Morrice. "It seems odd they did not summon her."

"Perhaps they thought the evidence of the father and Tom would have been sufficient. Perhaps the Coroner did not know of the daughter's presence on board till yesterday."

"If he did it she would be the person to know," said Mr. Morrice. "Taking women as women, the chances are she would."

"To tell you the truth, I am inclined to think there was a doubt in her mind about Tom doing it. I saw her about it."

Mr. Morrice looked quickly up at his son

as he said this, but made no remark on it. Presently he said—

"It was an oversight. The whole thing is a very strange one. If this young man Tom did not know Robert Tapps why should he kill him?"

Thus Mr. Morrice was driven into the same reasoning as were Harding and the Coroner.

"Why indeed?" said Frank.

"Perhaps, after all, it was not his doing."

Frank was silent.

"I see you suspect him."

"I do not know anything more than what appeared on the inquest; but I cannot understand his absence except on one hypothesis. I don't the least expect him to put in an appearance for some time to come—if he escapes capture by the constable."

The subject dropped here. Mr. Morrice,

opening his letters, announced one from Sir Charles Underside, and that all the family were intending an early flitting to London after Christmas for a fortnight. "There's something in the wind, depend on it. I hope it is Marion, and not my favourite Anna. I don't want that nice girl married to anybody yet." Frank instinctively divined the meaning of this expression. Mr. Morrice continued—"You do not now need me to tell you, Frank, that I leave you at full liberty to choose as you like."

"I do know it indeed, Dad; and I do hope I am not very ungrateful to you in choosing. If you wish it, however, I will make you a promise."

Thus the question was opened.

"No, no, my boy—no promises. Heaven forbid there should be any clog like that round our two necks! No, no; better than that for you to follow the bent of your

fancy, if you have one, and feel that I am not in your way, than have a promise, which may be a nothing to-day, and a barrier to-morrow, and a curse the day after."

"You are the best of fathers, Dad—that you are; and I should be a bad son, if I did not know and feel it. I should wish never to do anything you really objected to on this point of a wife. But then liking is not in our power, is it?"

"I have always taught this, Frank, and, therefore, I must not complain if it is quoted to me. I suppose I must understand you. It is, then, as I have lately had a suspicion. Anna has not a chance."

"None whatever," said Frank earnestly.

"Poor dear Lady Underside!" said Mr. Morrice. "When she comes to know this she will be severe upon me. However, there are worse things than this to bear in life."

"That depends on the bearer; and you, Dad, are the very best bearer of a traverse I ever knew or heard of."

"What is it the old Greek says," observed Mr. Morrice: "'Though fortune frowns upon me, yet I will never part with the principles I have all along professed.' I do not see why we are in this our day to be less men than Socrates. Of course I should have preferred the regular path of the social world for you to walk on, but if I must bear a deflexion from it, I must. There are two ways to most things human, and some choose one way and some the other. I can see which is the better way, according to the rule and line of our social fabric—the law of the building—but I shall not break my heart over a diversion from the line. It will still be a building, and perhaps a good one, though with a flaw in it. An exception proves the rule; an occasional

violation does not damage the law or change it."

"I do not blind myself," said Frank; "I know it is a diversion, and will be blamed."

"Antæus had many a fall, and rose the stronger from his mother earth," said Mr. Morrice. "What does this old classic story teach us, except that a man lives at first within the little circle of his own ideas and fancies—and in this he is weak and foolish; and until he has had a tussle with the world of opinion, and had a fall, he will not learn and be strong. 'Experientia docet.'—I must find consolation and support on lowly mother earth."

"I am sorry to hear you call it a fall, Dad; and yet I suppose it is one—in a social sense."

"Come, now, Frank, make a clean breast of it. I am your best friend—you know that. Let me hear something distinct; I

don't like shadows. What is she like—this young person?—Is she fair or dark?" Mr. Morrice was a little vexed.

"My dear father, you are indeed my best friend, and you have a full right to all my confidence, so I give it you unreservedly. I grant it is but a fancy—but then it is a fancy."

"And that means everything," said Mr. Morrice; "come now; is she fair or dark?"

"She is fair, and moderately tall." Mr. Morrice nodded his head, as a signal to continue. "She has refined features, like her father, who is as handsome a fellow as you will see on a long summer's day."

"Her voice? I go a good deal by voice as to nature," said Mr. Morrice, "though, of course, it is not a rule."

"She has a smooth voice, rather musical —some people call this a singing voice—

and she is quiet and modest, rather grave, with grave eyes."

"Her figure?" said Mr. Morrice.

"She has a pretty figure—rather slight—and good hands and feet, like her father again; and shining even teeth."

"I should like to see her," said Mr. Morrice; "I have a right to be curious about her; your account of her pleases me, though perhaps—perhaps——"

"Now don't perhaps, Dad. I know what you would say, that perhaps I exaggerate her good looks. I don't believe that I do in the least. How you are to see her I can't the least tell. You can't go on board the barge as she comes by to inspect her."

"No, not quite, Frank," Mr. Morrice smiled; and then he went on, "and this difficulty only shows how out of all order and rule the thing is. However, as you are strong enough by our artificial society to go

against the theory, and please yourself and act according to your natural bias, I suppose some day you will produce her to me." Mr. Morrice could not help his vexation a little showing itself. "Of course the father and the daughter both know of your—your—well, your fancy?"

"Upon my honour I am sure that the father does not even suspect it, and as to his daughter, I daresay she may have a guess at it, women are so wonderfully quicksighted in anything that concerns themselves; but—" and Frank shook his head.

"But what?"

"Well, I do not feel very sure of what she thinks of me."

"Frank, how can you be so absurd? Do you mean to tell me in sober earnest that this young unsophisticated girl would resist a man like you?"

"I mean plainly to assure you that I

think she possesses a thoroughly honest nature, and that if she were to like any one else I should have no chance of attracting her."

"Women are the strangest beings," said Mr. Morrice. "One never knows what they will or will not like. And so I will give no opinion hostile to your belief in her honesty. I wish it may prove this is her nature. Sometimes I think they have no individuality of character at all, and are but feminine adjectives to masculine substantives, which of course would be bad grammar; and sometimes I am inclined to agree with the prison matron, and think they possess a more distinct individuality than ourselves."

"I am sure that Susan Harding is an individual," said Frank laughing; "and more than that, I cannot help thinking that she is very much the kind of individual you will like."

"I daresay I shall," said Mr. Morrice.

"I believe her to be as good as she is pretty," said Frank.

What a beauty there is in Trust! Here was Frank Morrice, knowing nothing whatever of this young girl beyond what he could see in two short interviews, ready to take her entirely on trust, and also ready to recommend her to his father on trust. How lovely and generous is Trust! It sees no wrong, it believes blindly in the right, it gives up itself without a hesitation to the charms of a dependence on the will of another; it is a ready abnegation of self—a veiling of the reason. And this veiling of the reason, happily for mankind, turns out in the arrangements of Providence to be, how often, better than all reason—always, for a time—often, for a permanency; while without it there would be no happiness at all in the world. Mr.

Morrice, though he had argued the point with Lady Underside, and had quoted Socrates to Frank, had shewn he was not quite the antique Greek in bearing his son's confession of his fancy for Susan Harding. Mr. Morrice was not a Stoic; he was better—a man.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was likewise on the day after the adjourned inquest at Kew that a circumstance occurred which had much influence on the persons in our story. Mrs. Print had become settled in her pretty and snug cottage at Richmond; and she might be seen daily, either pacing up and down with quick steps on the terrace, and smiling to herself over the ideal picture in her mind of "The Lass of Richmond Hill," or down in the little town shopping, or sitting in some old body's cottage in the outskirts of the place.

She was a busy little woman, was Mrs. Print, and was social too, and she was fond of putting her foot inside other people's doors,

whether high or low, and of carrying her flow of spirits and her genial good-humour with her.

Now on this morning she was sitting by her fire in her little drawing-room, with the newspaper in her hand. She was searching —as she did every morning diligently—for a reply to her advertisement for her brother, Joseph Harding, but which never could be found. "Why, here's Joe, I declare, my goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Print, suddenly starting up, with the paper extended before her.

"Lor, ma'am, how you did start me, to be sure!" cried Hannah, who was dusting a table in a corner, and knocked off a book in her surprise.

"It's Joe. Oh! my goodness! and at this inquest too?"

"Inquest, ma'am?" said Hannah. "Your brother bain't dead? Oh! dear me!"

"No, no, not him, somebody else," Mrs. Print continued, reading eagerly. "Somebody killed, and here's all about it; and the Coroner and all been sitting at Kew close by yesterday, and we knew nothing at all about it; and Joe there, and a young man on board his barge was up in a creek where he was killed."

"Did the young man see him killed?" said Hannah. "Dear me!"

"My goodness, no! He wasn't killed in the creek—at least, it doesn't say so; and if he wasn't killed in the creek where the young man, Thomas Plank, was, I don't see what he had to do with it. Those lawyers and coroners, they do make such a confusion of words and talking, that one never does understand quite what they mean."

"They does, indeed, ma'am; but I'm glad your brother ain't the one that's killed."

"And here's all about the verdict," con-

tinued Mrs. Print; "wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, and ever so much said about the young man, Thomas Plank, because he didn't come to give his evidence. I'm sure I think he was very wise to stay away, and have nothing to do with it at all."

"Does it say anything of where your brother lives, ma'am?"

"Of course it does, and I must be off to London at once, and go down to Southwark and find him out. I'm sure he'll be very glad to see me, with all this trouble upon him, and a man killed close by the barge that he never saw in his life, one afternoon, when Joe was on board, in a foggy place. How in the world could he see anything about it when he was on board out in the river, and the young man killed all up a creek ever so far off, in a fog in the evening. It stands to reason Joe couldn't see anything;

and so I should have told the Coroner, if I had been there, only these people never will see things exactly as they are, according to common sense."

"Will you please to have your lunch afore you go, ma'am ?"

"No, no, lunch ! no. I must be off directly. I declare I'm in such a fluster, with all this thing of Joe, I don't know if I am on my head or my heels. Where are my thick boots ? For I shall have to walk ever so far, I'm sure, and Southwark, I remember, was always terribly dirty. Is my bonnet ready ? Union Wharf—how strange ! I'll be bound I shall find him easy enough, for father and mother lived near Southwark Bridge, in the City—now for my boa—and I remember, when I was a little girl, I used to go on it, and look through the railings at the boats—and where's my shawl, Hannah ? —and a man gave me a little push as I was

looking at the boats, and when I turned round he laughed, and I said he was a nasty man, and he said I was a pretty sauce-box. Dear me! how all this does come back upon me, just because of Joe being at Union Wharf. My goodness! how lucky there was that inquest, and the young man was killed. Of course I didn't want him to be killed—of course not!—but then if it hadn't been all in the paper I should never have known about Joe."

So the little woman rattled on as she hurried on her bonnet and shawl and the thick boots, when it suddenly struck her—how was she to go?

"Hannah, what time does the coach go to London?"

"The morning coach be gone long ago, ma'am, and there won't be another not till the arternoon."

"There, now!—but I can't wait and lose

all the day—what a plague these coaches are !"

So Hannah informed her that if she walked to Kew Bridge, only two miles, she would find plenty of coaches on the high London road, "and be in Piccadilly in no time." This Mrs. Print accordingly did, and was soon in London. She set off on foot from Piccadilly for Southwark, and found her way to the entrance of the premises of Wilcox, Union Wharf. Here she was directed to the little office of Mr. Charles. She tapped at the door, and being told to come in, she entered.

"If you please, sir," she began, and she put on what she called her "company manner," "I am Mrs. Print, the sister of Mr. Joseph Harding, who was at the inquest at Kew yesterday; and I read all about it in the papers this morning, and they said he was on one of your barges at this wharf."

Mr. Charles, seeing a well-dressed person enter, rose from his stool, and received his visitor with some courtesy. "The papers said quite right, Mrs. Print. I daresay your brother is on board his barge outside. May I ask," he added, after a pause, "if you live far from London? for I have known Harding for some years, and I never knew he had a sister."

"Dear me!—didn't you indeed?—and I don't know how you should know if my brother didn't tell you"—here her company manner broke down—"though it does seem odd that Joe should never tell you of his having a sister. We left London years ago—more than twenty years ago—and Print and I—that was my husband—we lived in York, and he died last autumn; and so I came up to live at Richmond only last week, and there it was I read the inquest this morning."

"Very right of you to come to see your brother, Mrs. Print, for this is a serious trouble to a steady man like him."

"Of course Joe doesn't know anything about this shocking cruel business—I'm sure of that, sir; for though I haven't seen or heard of Joe these twenty years or more, I remember, when he was a boy, he was the best-hearted boy that ever was, and it couldn't be in him to do it; for Joe had a tame sparrow when he was quite little, and the fuss he used to make about that tame sparrow—and once he had a dormouse, and where do you think he carried this dormouse about?—why, in his waistcoat pocket—so I'm sure he wouldn't do this shocking thing."

"Do it, Mrs. Print!—no one ever suspected Harding of it, or of knowing anything about it, be assured of that. But I daresay you would like to go to him. I

will send a man with you to show you the barge—the 'Columbine.'"

It so happened that the "Columbine" was lying outside in the stream, and so Mrs. Print had to cross two barges before reaching it. As she was creeping carefully along a plank, she saw a young female figure sitting on the roof of the cabin of the barge pointed out to her by the clerk as the "Columbine." She stopped short. "Why, my goodness, that must be his wife! She's quite a young thing. What could make Joe go and marry such a chit as that?"

"That's Harding's daughter," said the clerk, hearing her exclamation.

"Dear me!—and does she live here in the barge?"

"Yes, ma'am, she does," said the clerk; "and a very tidy young woman she is." So they reached the "Columbine."

Susan was sitting on the cabin roof, and

hearing voices, she looked up, and saw one of the clerks of Mr. Wilcox, conducting a very well-dressed person—dressed like a lady—on to the barge. As she came creeping along the gunwale towards the stern, Susan stood up. Then she advanced over the roof, and held out her hand. "Please to take my hand, ma'am—it's rather narrow along there for any one not used to it."

Mrs. Print took the offered hand, and steadied herself on to the roof. Then she stopped, and looked in Susan's face, and said, with a smile, and some little quiet dignity of manner—her company manner, "Am I speaking to the daughter of Joseph Harding?"

"My name is Susan Harding, ma'am; and he is my father."

Just at that moment Harding looked up over the cabin roof from the little court, on

hearing his name mentioned. Seeing this well-dressed lady, he stood still, and stared silently at her. Mrs. Print, looking round, caught sight of his face. For a moment she stood, uncertain and irresolute. She had left Joe a fine boy of eighteen, and here was a handsome, tall, bronzed man of forty-three. Then in her warm heart she felt it was Joe, and her memory, helped by her heart, recalled the eyes and features and the nameless somethings which are so little, and yet so much in these matters. She made but two steps along the roof, and threw out both her hands at him—"You're Joe—I know you are!"

"Why, Lord A'mighty bless my soul if it ain't Jenny! Wherever do you come from? Come down here and tell us all about it," and then he helped her down the steps, and kissed her, while the little woman burst out crying. "Well, who'd ha' thought o'

seeing you?—why, I haven't heerd of ye these twenty years. If anybody had axed me, I should ha' said you'd been dead maybe years agone."

"And so you might; though if anybody had asked me for you, Joe, I should never have thought you were dead; but only I couldn't tell what had become of you."

"That's like you, Jenny—you always was one o' the hopeful ones, I can mind me o' that." And then he led her inside the cabin, where they sat down.

"Do you remember the tame sparrow, Joe, and the dormouse?"

"In coorse I do; and you used to take care of 'em for me sometimes," said Harding, jovially.

"And a pretty row you used to make about that little black sparrow when you came home from working at the boat-

builder's; and if it chirped, you said it was saying it was hungry."

"How you do hold on to things, Jenny. I'd forgot that about the chirp; but I mind it now quite."

"And many a time you would take that dormouse in your waistcoat pocket when you went to work, till I made you leave it with me, because one day you let it drop in the water."

"That's true, Jenny, so I did; and then Print—I mind when he came a-coorting. What's come o' Print?"

"Poor dear Print!" said Jenny, with a sigh; and she looked grave.

"Ah! I see how it is. Got any chicks, Jenny?"

"None now, Joe—both died—young."

"The Lord bless 'em!" said Harding, feelingly. "I've got one—Susan; never had but she—here, Susan, here's your Aunt Jane."

Susan had remained outside the cabin while her father and his visitor were within it—at first not quite comprehending the whole situation, and then continuing outside from an instinctive feeling that they were better alone for a time, and she would not interrupt them. Now, at the call of her father, she came in. Mrs. Print got up and kissed her.

"You've often heerd me talk of Aunt Jane, Suz, and say she must be dead?"

"Yes, father, very often."

"And your wife, Joe?—where's your wife?" said Mrs. Print.

"Well, Jenny, she be gone where Print be—she've been gone now two years—Susan was out at service, and her mother were here along o' me in the barge; and when she went, I took Susan, as I was lonely. She were a good woman were Susan's mother; but she went off sudden-like."

"That's how we lose those we love," said Mrs. Print, sorrowfully. "You lost yours, and I lost mine, and now you and I must be something to one another."

"You always was kind-hearted, Jenny; but you be so grand now. Print was rich, I'd allow, and you're dressed quite like a lady, and I must go on with the barge, you see; and so you and me we can't be much along of each other, can we?"

"I don't see that at all, Joe. I'm going to live at Richmond, and you'll be going up the river pretty often; and then you can come and see me, and I can go in the barge with you when you will let me. You can come and pass Sunday with me now and then, and there'll be a bedroom I shall call Joe's room; and sometimes you can leave Susan for a week or ten days with me when you go up, or when you go down."

"What picturs you can draw, Jenny!"

"Is that your dog, Susan?" said Mrs. Print, just then seeing Pipes. "What do you call him?" And, hearing his name, she went on, "What a funny name! You must bring Pipes with you. And I have a pretty garden—that is, it will be in the spring-time, when the flowers come; and there'll be a room for Susan—for I have two bed-rooms upstairs, besides my own and one for Hannah—that's the woman who does every-thing for me, and a good creature she is—wife to a gardener to some lord that lives in the Richmond Park; and she knows about geraniums, and she can make pies. And then I've got the books which Print liked most, for I didn't sell quite all he left behind; and Susan will like to read them. And there's the terrace for her and me to walk on in the evenings, when the spring comes and Pipes is with us; and we can

hear the nightingales in the gardens, and Susan will be the Lass of Richmond Hill."

Susan laughed out merrily at all this, for she couldn't help being carried along the train of pleasant images which the cheerful words of her aunt conjured up.

"Why, Jenny, you be quite a pote," said Harding, joining in the laugh; "and have as many fancies as one of the writers of the books. Was Print a pote?"

"No, not quite; he didn't write verses, not himself, but he was fond of repeating verses that were in the books he liked the best. He'd go on sometimes for ever so long, in the mornings, walking up and down the garden at York, with his hands behind him, and he'd say *Marmion*, ever so much of it, right off, or *Alexander's Feast*, or bits of Shakespeare, but he was fondest of Pope's *Homer*. How he used to spout this:—

'As when a lion, rushing from his den,
Amidst the plain of some wide-watered fen,
Where numerous oxen, as at ease they feed,
At large expatiate o'er the ranker mead.'

Poor Print, how happy he was on these mornings, spouting, as he called it; and then he'd come in and eat such a breakfast, and declare he'd been in Greece, or Venice, or somewhere else, and was hungry after his trip. Poor dear Print, he was a kind man!"

"Lord bless my soul, Jenny, how you do go on with all they people, and things, and all sorts—it's wonderful!" Then, after a pause, "Well, Jenny, we'll see about it. Suz will like to come and pay you a visit, I'll be bound, now and again; and she can read her book, and you and she can go to those places in foreign parts and get a appetite,"—a kindly smile played over Harding's face as he said this,—"but they ain't much in my way, d'ye see. I likes the barge and the river, and I'm got used to it all, and I

don't allow I could be happy anywhere away from it—that's home to me."

"Will you come and see me sometimes, Susan?" said the little woman, taking her hand, and holding it.

"If father likes it,"—she hesitated,—"that is, if father wants me I shouldn't go away from him."

"I'm not a-going to drive you away, Suz, and I'm not a-going to keep you away from your aunt along o' me, jest to please myself. You're a-getting up, Suz, and I've been a considering more nor once how and about you, and if your Aunt Jane would wish you to come and stop jest a bit, for a night or two, the next time we go by Richmond, which may be about next week, why, I'm agreeable."

"That's it, Joe—now that's beautiful, and it's all settled; now I shall go home quite happy, and Hannah and I will set about

having your room all ready for you, Susan; and I know what I'll have—all sorts of things that you'll like—and I'll make it as pretty as ever I can; and you will like to come, won't you?"

"I'm sure I shall like to come, aunt, if you wish to have me," said Susan, smiling. "I am sure it will be pretty, and it's very kind in you."

"You're a dear," said Mrs. Print, throwing her arms round Susan's neck, and giving her a sounding kiss, in the exuberance of her gladness at the entire success of her visit. "You're a dear thing! and I shall love you very much, Susan, I can see; and then you'll love me just a little, you know, and we shall be great friends; and when the summer comes I shall go up in the barge with you, Joe, and Susan and I will have strawberries and cream on board, for I shall grow the strawberries in my own garden,

and Joe shall have some with us, if he's good, and behaves himself." The merriment of the little woman communicated itself to Joe and Susan, and they all three laughed out in concert.

Suddenly, in the midst of this, Mrs. Print remembered the inquest. They had all forgotten this trouble in the reminiscences of old days and in the plans for the future. Now it came with a swift and sudden blow upon her. She turned to Harding, laid her hand on his arm, and looked gravely into his eyes. "Where's the young man, Thomas Plank?" said she, in a low tone. Harding's face clouded over too in an instant. He shook his head, and made no other reply. Susan sat silent.

"Have you heard nothing of him?"

"Nothing," said Harding.

"But none of you knew the poor man," said Mrs. Print.

"None on us."

"What a strange thing altogether!" observed Mrs. Print, in a low voice. There was a dead silence, and even the little woman was subdued. She saw by her brother's face that she was treading on tender ground, so she abstained from further questions, and did not venture more remarks. She rose to go, when Harding proposed, to save her the walk through Southwark and the city, to take her in his boat to Westminster Bridge. So Susan put on her bonnet, and they all three went over the side, and Harding sculled them up to Westminster. The little woman found her way to Piccadilly, and in due time a coach carried her to Richmond.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG the acquaintances of Frank Morrice in the neighbourhood of The Wick were Mr. and Mrs. Codling; and so in a few days after the adjourned inquest he, remembering the evidence of Mrs. Codling, the aunt of Robert Tapps, thought of scull-ing down the river to pay her a visit of condolence on the distressing death of her nephew. So he walked down to Sangster's cottage, and taking his skiff, set off.

On reaching Mortlake, Frank found Mrs. Codling at home. The worthy and warm-hearted woman was much affected at seeing him, reminding her, as he had reminded her sister, Mrs. Tapps, of the murdered young

man, by his striking resemblance to him in face and person. She bemoaned his fate in her overflowing way, in speech and in tears, and told Frank over again all that Bob had said to her on that fatal afternoon, of his visit to The Wick, and of the horses, which she had detailed at the inquest, amplifying it of course in the unrestrained freedom of her feeling that she was speaking to a sympathising ear. She then canvassed freely the question of the barge, and was unmeasured in her denunciations of Tom Plank, who she concluded must be the murderer, and took the opportunity to be severe upon barges in general.

Upon this latter part of Mrs. Codling's lament Frank observed a good deal of reticence, confining himself to few and vague generalities ; but, in other respects, he listened to it all with that usual ready share in the pains and sorrows of his humbler neigh-

bours which had won for him the general regard of those within his reach, whether on the Strand near The Wick, or at Kew, or at Mortlake. By his questions now he led on Mrs. Codling into various branches of the subject. How a few expressions of sincere sympathy unlock the hearts of people, and how readily these pour out in answer to the seducing words a whole succession of small histories, each history of deep importance to the teller, and which holds in itself quite a world of incident, humble though it may be, but which involves a train of interests where whole lives and all their aims—their hopes and their disappointments—are centred. So Mrs. Codling poured forth her volume of story, her dead hopes and her living disappointments, all at the magic touch of Frank's kindly voice, and the simple earnestness of his manner. He asked her, among other things, why Bob had gone

home by the osiers and the creek instead of by the towing-path or the road; but to this question Mrs. Codling declared she could give him no reasonable answer. Bob had done so before, she said, often enough in the summer-time; and then she had thought it natural, for on a summer evening that way was a pleasanter walk to Kew than either the towing-path or the road; but now, in the winter, it was to her quite unaccountable, and she thought it was "his fate that did it."

Codling, her husband, coming into the room just then, observed, in his usual, to him, rather abrupt way—"'Twas stupid of him, Mr. Morrice—that's what I say."

"Now, Codling," said his wife, "don't ye go blaming the poor feller, and he hardly cold in his grave—'tain't kind of ye. Poor Bob, he'd got a maggot about going home that way; and why shouldn't the poor feller

have his maggot as well as another? You has your maggots, you knows that well enough, and why shouldn't he have his'n?"

"There was the horse and shay," said Codling—"he'd better have had that, when 'twas offered him, than go home that way, and then he wouldn't have got himself into that trouble—would he, Mr. Morrice?"

Frank shook his head sagaciously, and with that mournfulness which befitted the subject. "It would have been more prudent, certainly, as it turned out; but then perhaps he had some reason of his own which we don't know."

"That's my way of thinking," said Mrs. Codling. "How do we know what the poor feller had in his head?—why, in corse, if he'd a-knowed what was afore him, he wouldn't ha' run his head into such a halter as that. But you're always so wise, you are, Codling—you know so much better

nor anybody else; and if you'd had the same maggot in your head as our Bob had, you'd ha' done every bit the same as him, and got your head broke too; but, Mr. Morrice, he makes his excuses for poor Bob."

"Perhaps he wanted to show himself on Strand," said Codling, doggedly—"like enough."

"Well, if ever I did!" exclaimed his wife. "You always did say things against poor Bob when he were alive, and now you can't let him alone in his coffin. For why should you go to make out as he would go through all that wet and dirt just to show hisself? Why, couldn't he show hisself all day, and any day, at Kew, or go over the bridge, and walk along Strand?—and very natural, too, if he did, for he was handsome enough; and there ain't anybody but would be pleased at seeing our Bob walk along Strand or anywheres else, with his beautiful

whiskers, and his hat jest like a gentleman's, and his clothes fitting him a pretty deal better than yours ever do, Codling; and then for you to go throwing stones at him like that, and him that has took his last walk anywheres, and is laying in the place he'll never get out of no more till the trumpet is a-sounding—if it ain't downright cruel!"

Between her anger with her husband and her affectionate remembrances of her nephew, Mrs. Codling was nearly crying. So Frank turned away the conversation from that irritating riddle—the last walk of young Tapps.

"Poor Bob! he used to like to come down to The Wick. I was looking for another visit from him when this took place."

"Ah! you may say indeed, Mr. Morrice, as the poor lad liked his visits to your place. His head was a-running upon your old groom, Dick, up to the last moment as

he was here; and he was a-talking of him and the horses as he was sitting in that very chair where Codling is a-sitting, and he said as he saw you and your father walking in the grounds as he came along the tow-path, and how he should go, as you was come home, and ask Dick what sport you had had down in the country, where you'd been a-hunting; and he takes out a shilling out of his pocket and puts it on the table, and puts his hand on it, and he says, 'Now, which is it—heads or tails? If it's heads, then I go to-morrow to The Wick; and if it's tails, then I go there the day after."

"Yes," said Codling, breaking in, "it was heads; but it wasn't much use which it come, heads or tails."

"But it pleased him thinking of it," said Mrs. Codling; "and it showed how he was happy here a-playing with himself, you may say, about which day he were to go; and any way, I don't see where it is kind in you,

Codling, to bring it up against him that it wasn't any use in him making a innocent promise to himself over that shilling. Why, here be you, a-promising yourself, quite free-and-easy, this forenoon, that you'll go to-morrow morning to Meux's in Tottenham Court Road about that porter; and s'posing, without your putting down any shilling on the table, you was to fall down dead this very evening over your toasted cheese and your beer—and perhaps you will—and it will be a'most a judgment on ye if you do, for what you've been a-saying about poor Bob. Well, it wouldn't be very polite if Mr. Morrice and me, when we see you laying there on your back by the side of your cheese, we was to say, 'There wasn't any shilling, but there won't be any going to Meux's at Tottenham Court Road to-morrow.' Would it, Mr. Morrice?"

This was an awkward question for Frank

to meet, so he avoided meeting it by going round it.

"If I tell you what I think, Mrs. Codling, it is this—that I do not think I ever saw a man less likely to die of his Welsh rabbit this evening than Codling. My opinion is that, if you give him much encouragement by talking of his dying, he will eat two, and be none the worse for them."

"I'll have two, as sure as my name's Codling!" said that worthy man, slapping his leg.

Mrs. Codling was rather taken aback by this sudden and unexpected diversion from her lament over her nephew and her charge against her husband, and was silent; and Frank, thinking this a good opportunity for bringing his visit to an end, got up from his chair, and, with a few kind general words at parting, went away.

As Frank walked along the towing-path towards where his skiff was lying, he bethought

him of another of his humbler acquaintance at Mortlake, who had also figured in the affair of Robert Tapps at the adjourned inquest, namely, Humpy, the fat baker. So he went on to Humpy's shop. The baker was in bed, his legs in a worse state than usual. So Frank was admitted to his bedroom. There lay the figure of the mighty man, for his inches such as might have been Og, King of Bashan, or as Milton describes Satan—

"Prone . . . . extended long and large."

After a few words from Frank, relative to the state of health of the baker, he referred to the inquest. "You saw young Tapps that day, Humpy."

"I spoke to Mr. Bob on the tow," said Humpy, making an ineffectual attempt to draw together the folds of his bed-costume, which lay open, and exposed all the huge torso, bare and Herculean in its proportions.

"It is a pity he went home by the osiers,"

said Frank, "when his uncle Codling offered him a horse and gig; though perhaps he had his reasons for a walk that way. I am told he generally went home that way in the summer evenings."

"I've a-seed Mr. Bob go by they osiers in the summer time," said the baker huskily; "and it were nateral as he'd favour a walk there in the summer, afore driving along a dusty road, or a spell on the tow. Ye see, Mr. Morrice, may be there's water along of the osiers, but 'tis a sight better to have a cup o' water in your shoes with a dab o' weed in it, as I says to mother, than a pennorth o' tin tacks in 'em on the tow."

"Perhaps that was the reason after all," said Frank," he had had one walk down the towing-path that day, and perhaps he thought one was enough."

"I reckon that was it, sir, and that was what I said to mother. She be for ever a-talking o' that inquest, and mother says as

nater don't leave out nothing; but I says to her, says I, there be a thing as nater have left out, in my opinion. Why haven't nater left it in, that when they men of the jury and the Coroner, and the doctor, and all of 'em is a-trying to find out whoever was the death of this young man, and they can't work it nohow,—why haven't nater left it in as the young man could say for hisself—it were that Plank as killed me. Ye see, nater have left that out. What a mort o' trouble would ha' been saved up."

"Well, but, Humpy, then the man would be alive," said Frank, humouring the eccentric man.

"I don't say nothing agin that, Mr. Morrice; what I holds to is, nater have left that out."

"I am afraid that arrangement is left out," said Frank laughing; "but as you seem to be concerned about it, I promise you if anything happens to you unexpectedly, and an inquest should be held upon you, and I

am in the way, you shall be asked this question—Humpy, who killed you?"

"I thank ye, Mr. Morrice; you be allays obliging. It'll be easier for me now I knows as you'll make that inquire if an inquest be a-top of me."

"But you are not expecting an inquest on yourself, Humpy. Nobody is going to kill you."

"Ye see, sir," said the baker mournfully, "there be mother's cat, Tib; she be a cat, but she be something more nor that. Our dog, Tinker, he comes up and he looks ye in the face as bold as a rolling pin, and says he, Morning, Humpy, as plain as ever can be, honest like; but the cat, that Tib, she slidles up sideways, ye may say, and gives me a rub with her side, and turns her back on, with her starn a-going, and there she stands purring—'tis that purring as does it."

"Well, Humpy, what does the purring do?"

"Ye see, Mr. Morrice, I've been a-spelling over that murder, and I says to mother,

'There ain't nobody as has done it, in case it ain't that young man on the barge as was up there a-killing rats. There's folk as is plaguy fond o' killing—if 'tain't one thing it's t'other. When he'd a-done killing rats, he jest had a turn at Mr. Bob; and he hadn't no 'quaintance with Mr. Bob; and no more he hadn't o' they rats afore he goes up the creek. So he warn't obligated to be 'quainted with Mr. Bob, if he had a turn for killing—d'ye see, Mr. Morrice?"

"But, Humpy, my good fellow, people don't kill men as they do rats."

"'Tis in the nater o' some, sir, to be a-killing. There's our Tib—she ain't never happy but when she's a-killing birds, or mice, or something. She'll come in the parlour as kind maybe as a tea-cake, and she'll come and rub herself up again my leg, and stand out afore me, and begin a-purring—that purring means mischief."

"How's that?" said Frank. "When cats

are purring, that's a sign they are content."

"Ye see, Mr. Morrice, 'tain't in the nater o' cats to be content. They's like young women. There's many a young woman as comes in here, and maybe she wants a pennorth o' cracknels, and whiles I'm a-serving on her, she turns her back on me and begins a-purring. I knows what that means. That's how they begins killing. If mother's in the shop, then she don't purr, ye see, so terrible; and there's mother and they bags o' biscuit and they sacks o' flour to take care o' me."

"Well, anyhow, you're safe then, Humpy."

"That's what I says to mother; but then s'posing as I was up the tow, and one o' they young women was to come along and begin a-doing as Tib do—give her coats a-rub again me, and begin a-purring—where 'ud I be?"

"I'm afraid you're soft, Humpy—a great big man like you shouldn't be soft."

"Ye see, Mr. Morrice, 'tain't a matter o'

bigness. There's hard uns and there's soft uns; there's coffee biscuits and there's sponge. Now, Codling, he be, ye may say, one of the hard kind—a coffee-er. You takes a coffee-er, and you drops him right down into a cup o' one o' they young women's tea, and he comes up again not fur off as he went down—Codling ain't no more nor jest wetted; but you let down a sponge, there I goes down—slouch—right into that young woman's tea; and when I comes up again I be so full on her as a'most ready half o' me to fall off into her, and never get out no more."

"Why, Humpy, you'd go all to pieces," said Frank. "You must keep out of the way of those young women, or they'll be the death of you."

The baker looked steadily at Frank for a moment, and then, moving his head mournfully on one side, his little eyes blinking, he said, "That's what I've been a-counting, Mr.

Morrice. I says to mother t'other day, says I, 's'posing as I falls down dead on the tow, they'll be sure to begin a-inquesting a-top o' me.' And mother says, 'William,' says she, 'I 'opes you'll die some morning comfortable in your bed, 'cause that's reg'lar and according; and though nater don't leave it out your falling down dead on the tow, I 'opes she won't be partikler as to that.' And I says to mother, 'If I don't die comfortable here in the smell of they eight-pennies, as have been wilets and roses to me ever since I were a boy, and they finds me on the tow, and goes a-inquesting a-top o' me, it won't be no good, for they won't find out what I died on."

"Why not?" said Frank. "But I hope you will live a good many years yet, and die like a Christian in your bed when you do go, and not have any inquest on you."

"None on us can't tell, Mr. Morrice, if

he'll be inquested on; and you'll not forget what you promised me about making the enquire of me, if, maybe, I'm on the tow; 'cause the doctor and the Coroner they won't see as there were a young woman anigh me a-purring. Ye see that 'ere goes through me jest like mother's knife into a stale fourpenny—skewery; and if it weren't left out by nater as I could speak up to your inquire, I'd say,—Mr. Coroner, here's one as is dead o' purring."

"Ah! Humpy, my good fellow," said Frank, getting up from his chair, "you won't die of that yet a good while—it takes a deal of young women's purring to kill a man. So make your mind easy. Good day, and I hope your legs will be better in a day or two, and you'll be about again as hearty as usual."

"Thankee, Mr. Morrice," said the baker, mournfully.

As Frank was leaving the house, he found at the door Mrs. Humpy, the mother of the ponderous man upstairs. She was a small woman, but to the full as eccentric a character as her son; and the habits of life and ways of talking of the two were often the subject of amusement among the neighbours. Still, they were quiet and inoffensive people, and conducted their shop with order. Now, as Frank went out, he stopped to have a few minutes' conversation with Mrs. Humpy; and her remarks about her "William" were quite as quaint as were those of her son as to the opinions of his "mother." Her last remark to Frank was, "that her William was a good boy, and well-growed, if the huzzies would but let him alone—he couldn't marry 'em all." No one would have guessed that this Og of twenty-five stone was an object of general adoration to the young girls of Mortlake.

CHAPTER IX.

A WEEK or two passed by before the "Columbine" was at Richmond. But at last the day, anxiously looked forward to by Mrs. Print, and rather wistfully, too, by Susan, arrived. In fact, though the barge had become, from habit and circumstance, a pleasant home to Susan—its movement from place to place and its humble amount of adventure having their attractions—yet the pictures of other things drawn by her Aunt Jane, and her sunny, sprightly way of talking, and her warm, affectionate manner, had captivated the young girl. She could think of little else after her departure from the barge but the little woman and her

pleasant face, and her visions of life at Richmond. Besides which, every now and then a certain figure would cross her mind, and connected with it was a thought—that Richmond was not very far from The Wick. Sometimes, too, she would think over Tom, and his strange conduct about the murder, and his sudden departure ; but this figure gave her little pleasure or satisfaction. Though she was fully aware of Tom's admiration for herself, she found in his absence a relief. His violence and his waywardness repelled her. She did not now in any degree reciprocate Tom's liking. She could not but have her doubts about his share in the murder, and this at times made her afraid of him.

Without any defined idea whatever in her mind, the young girl now and then would think to herself what an odd chain of events had brought her life of late into

connection with The Wick. It was the one spot all up the river which fastened itself on her memory, and touched her imagination, for here and about it the most important occurrences in her young life—and to her of very serious import they were—had taken place. She did not attempt to conceal from herself that Frank was a pleasant image in the scene, and she had a kind of instinctive feeling that she was of some interest to Frank. Susan was too innocent and too simple and too young to have any thought as to whether this was foolish or wrong; in fact, she hardly knew that there was anything in her mind beyond a gratefulness to Frank for saving the life of her dog at first, and then showing on more than one occasion that he thought about her. When they had met, there was a charm to her in his manners and appearance; and there was something, too, in his tone of

voice and expression that made her inclined to trust in him as a person superior to those she saw at other times. In this feeling she had ventured to write to him her thanks, totally ignorant of any thought of impropriety on her part in doing so. He had come to her, and had appeared to trust in her; and so what could she do, when he took the trouble to come and do an act of kindness by her and hers, but give him her confidence in return. So trust in Frank was day by day entering into her life by accidental circumstances, and without her having any volition or choice in the matter. Thus, while Frank was expressing a trust in Susan to his father, a similar feeling towards Frank was growing up in her. What was likely to come of this mutual confidingness between two young people? No matter what is the difference of conventional station, mutual

trust makes a bridge over the chasm from one to the other.

So the day was sunny to Susan, though in the midst of winter's mist and smoke, which saw the "Columbine" leave her moorings by the Union Wharf for Richmond. Harding and his barge ran quickly up the stream, and were soon over the spot now so full of memories to him—the water by the osiers and the creek. He sat on the cabin roof, steering, as the vessel ran up with a full tide, gravely smoking his pipe. Susan was sitting on the top step of her stairs in the stern sheets. Both were silent, he occupied with his thoughts, she with hers; he thinking of Tom, and the circumstances of the inquest; she, of The Wick, and those in it. No one was visible, and they soon shot Kew Bridge, and were quickly at Richmond.

"I declare here they are!" cried Mrs. Print to Hannah. "Here comes the barge,

and I can see Joe up on the cabin steering, and there's Susan looking out. They told us just the right time to be here, at high tide. How very delightful! And there's the boy getting the boat round for them to get into, and come to us. Capital! I do hope Joe will be able to come too; his room is all ready. You're sure those sheets are well aired in the room over the kitchen, Hannah? I'm always so frightened if sheets are not aired, for there was Mrs. Tobley at York, she was put into a damp bed, and she caught her death; that is, she didn't die for two years and more, but they all said—except that stupid doctor, who didn't know anything about it, as those doctors never do—it was the damp bed she was put into one night, when she went on a visit to her sister's, at her house in that village, I forget the name now—how those names do slip out of one's memory!—Gobstall, or Bobstall, or

something like that. Here they are! Hurrah! Joe, how glad I am! and Susan looking just like cherry-tart; and the dog too—there's Pipes—dear little Pipes! Where are your things, Joe?"

"Mustn't stop this time, Jenny. Now, Susan, jump out."

"Not stop? Why in the name of goodness not?" exclaimed Mrs. Print, dolefully.

"Time and tide, Jenny, don't stop for no man. We must be up at lock with this tide afore it turns. We can jest do it."

"Oh! Joe, I'm so disappointed; and there's your room all ready, and sheets aired, and everything."

"Well, well, Jenny, don't be put out. When I comes down again I'll look in upon ye. I don't know about stopping all night, d'ye see, a-cause I must look arter my business aboard—mustn't let that go, Jenny,—that comes first."

"That's just what Print was always saying—business first, and so I suppose it's right; but you will come and see me on your way down. I'm so disappointed. When will you be down, do you think?"

"In about a week I expect; say this day week. We're going up a goodish bit this voyage, and we shan't be down no sooner; so if you look out about that time we shan't be far off. Good-bye, Jenny; good-bye, Suz. I must be going now," and so he pushed off from the shore, and was soon sculling himself swiftly up stream after the "Columbine," through Richmond Bridge.

"Ah, here's a man that will be glad to earn sixpence, I daresay, and carry your box, Susan; it isn't very large. There, put it on your shoulder, my good man, and come with us; now, Susan." And away they went, up through the town, Pipes keeping close to his mistress. Of course Mrs.

Print talked all the way home, stopping and pointing out to Susan everything that caught her attention as they went along. So in time they arrived at the cottage.

Her first business was to make her niece feel at home by shewing her how much she had done to make her room pretty and attractive, adorning the walls and the tables with various small objects of use or ornament, dear to female eyes. It is true that Susan was utterly unaccustomed to all this, her life hitherto having been one of entire simplicity and plainness; but female instinct is often a genius. It will leap at once from the common to the ornate, from the rude to the cultivated, from the rough to the polished, with an almost innate appreciation of the better beyond, and without the long process of learning. Some are born with an added sense, a sense of refinement. So Susan at once felt the difference between

what she saw around her and what she had left behind, and she was aware of a thrill of, first surprise, and then of enjoyment, as her eyes met all the many, though simple, little novelties which her aunt had placed within her reach. The little woman had done this, partly for her own satisfaction, to please herself in pleasing her niece, and partly with another purpose. This latter object was contained in a good deal of thought about Susan, as Mrs. Print returned home that day from Southwark, and might be summed up in these words. "Susan is very pretty, and she ought to be in a better place than that barge; it is not fit for her, and I am sure she is good by her face; and Print would say, if he was here, that a girl like that ought to know something of books and the inside of them. Why, of course she should, and so she shall;" and the energetic little woman squeezed one

hand tight over the other as she sat in the coach and the thought of her little budding plan ran through her mind. "I daresay she does not know a word of Shakespeare, nor a line of the 'Lady of the Lake,' nor 'The Curfew tolls the Knell,' nor anything." So, under all her gaiety of manner, and her frequent whimsicality of talking, and her fondness for rambling stories, there was in her a fund of kindly nature, and a warmth of heart, and a desire to be useful, besides a certain perception, in an indistinct way, of things and ideas above the drudgery of life. If any one had asked her in what education consisted, she would have made some extraordinary and most confused statements. But without being able to give any clear and defined account of what it was, she knew by intuition that it was what Susan had not. If any one had said to her, "Are you going to educate your niece?"

she would have exclaimed, "My goodness gracious! no; but I am sure she and I shall enjoy some evenings when I read 'The Lady of the Lake' to her or 'The Merchant of Venice.'"

"There now, Susan, there's your room, and I have made it as pretty as ever I can."

Susan looked round it. "Oh, it is pretty!" she exclaimed, in a voice scarcely above a whisper. Mrs. Print clapped her hands with pleasure, and then put her arms round her niece and gave her a hearty kiss. "Now, I shall call this Susan's room—mind that, Hannah," as the woman brought in the box, "this is Miss Susan's room."

"It do look pleasant, indeed," said the woman; "and I'm sure we've been and worked night and day to straight it and make it as it should be."

"You see these drawers are for your

dresses, and that's for your handkerchiefs and ribbons," said Mrs. Print.

"But I have only one gown besides this I have on," said Susan, laughing, "and it won't look much in that big drawer."

"My gracious! Only one more! Then the very first thing we'll do shall be to go off into the town and get something to put into the big drawer. What's the use of drawers if there's nothing to put in them? Now, Hannah, unpack the box, and we'll put everything away nice, and then we'll go off to the shop. I declare there is only one dress—now that's just what happened to me when I married Print—one on and one off; and then Print wouldn't rest—though he wasn't rich then—but he must give me another."

"You was quite costumed, then, ma'am," said Hannah.

"Costumed?" said Mrs. Print, "costumed?"

"Yes; got your costums on, ma'am."

"You dear good Hannah, what funny words you do use! And look here, Susan, here's a drawer in your looking-glass for your earrings and brooches."

"But I have only one pair of earrings, aunt, and I wear them every day. And father bought me this brooch the other day, because I was coming here; father said I didn't want such things on the barge."

"Joe's a naughty old father—no, I don't mean that; he is a good old father; but we'll give him a surprise when he comes next week. And now there are your things all put away comfortable in your drawers, and we'll go and see what there is in the shop."

So the active little woman bore off Susan into the town in search of a dress. As is usual in such cases, one thing produced another. One want was only the parent of

half-a-dozen other wants. This one object of female dress required many other objects to keep it company, to support it, and decorate it, and make it pretty, and to complete it. And then there was so much choosing and comparing, and matching, and fancying, and consulting, that the finding of this one dress involved a labour of the best part of the December afternoon.

Mrs. Print, too, was bent on two things—on pleasing her niece, and on surprising Joe; so that there was, in consequence, a demand on all her powers of taste that was, to say the least of it, enormous. And then Susan had to be consulted, and the young man of the shop had to be consulted, and then the young woman of the shop had to be consulted, as to colour, and as to pattern, and as to Susan's complexion, and the colour of her hair, and the height of her person, and the fashion, and a great many

other things. Susan had never in her life gone through such a performance. Hitherto, if she had wanted any little simple article of dress, she had gone with her father, or by herself, and had bought it at a small shop in Southwark, without much trouble or question. Now she was suddenly launched into a large and handsome shop, in company with a well-dressed person, like a lady, commanding all the attention and civility of men and women, and hurried at one step into a new world of articles long beyond her former powers of acquisition. She felt a little bewildered with it all; but before she came out of the shop, Susan had got over her surprise sufficiently to find that she had an opinion that she liked blue better than grey. "There now," exclaimed Mrs. Print to the shopwoman, "I knew you would agree with me—my niece, you see, is fair, and this goes well with her hair. I

always thought so the first moment I saw her; and grey is too pale, and goes very well with dark hair, and that is why you wear grey yourself, and it suits you capitally; and, Susan, I'll tell you what we'll do, now we're here—we'll buy a new handkerchief for father—a red one, with white spots on it—that's what sailors wear, I know, on Sundays; and we'll make him wear it the day he comes; and Joe will look as handsome in it as ever he did when he was a boy, when he used to go off to his work with the dormouse in his pocket."

And so the red handkerchief with white spots for Joe's neck was added to the other treasures, and ordered to be sent to the cottage; and Mrs. Print and Susan sallied forth triumphant, as the female heart is when a successful bit of shopping is over, and there is in the said heart the feeling of delighted present possession of pretty things,

and also the delightful future prospect of shewing those pretty things to the admiring world on the fascinating person of the owner of the heart.

As they were going home Mrs. Print alluded to the red kerchief for her brother. "I'm sure father will be pleased with it," said Susan; "for I remember he used to wear one last year, till it got faded."

"That's right—I am so glad—I don't know how that colour came into my head, for I haven't seen anything of sailors for ever so many years; but I think somebody must have told me of it somewhere—perhaps in some newspaper. I'm sure Print never told me so, for he knew nothing about sailors. He used always to wear a black one round his neck, except when he wore a white one, which he did on Sundays—and sometimes besides. I never could tell why he did this, except he thought it looked

like a clergyman as we walked to church—to the cathedral, you know, where we always went every Sunday to hear the anthem in the afternoon; and then Print always had on his white handkerchief round his neck; and he looked, I must say, just like one of the canons, in his black clothes, all as neat as a new pin, and nobody looked better in the whole place; and I remember one day the text of the sermon was, 'The Lion of Judah;' and I couldn't help looking at Print, and thinking of him walking up and down in the mornings before breakfast in our little garden, and spouting, as he called it, with his hands behind him—'As when a lion rushing from his den;' and Print caught my eye, and he saw what I was thinking of, for he told me so afterwards, and he gave me such a frown—I can see it now; but we ought not to think of such things in church, ought we, Susan? And I'm sure I don't,

only sometimes a naughty wicked thought will jump right into your head, you don't know where from, just as if the black gentleman was watching, you know, and, plump—he made it come into your head, all of a moment, like a bit of his wickedness."

So they walked home very happy, and Pipes as happy as they were. Good spirits of people communicate themselves to dogs, by the tone of the voice, and the manner; and so, as Susan and Mrs. Print were happy, Pipes was happy, and he barked at everybody in the road; and, not content with that, he continually took a rush forward at some imaginary being, and barked, and then rushed back again and barked at Susan.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Master Pipes," said Mrs. Print, "we'll all three go home and sit by the fire, and read 'The Merchant of Venice.'

'Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head,
How begot, how nourished?'

But Pipes and you are both too young yet to have fancies, Susan." So the little woman walked home merrily, and the trio were very content with each other.

CHAPTER X.

COINCIDENCES are matters beyond our ken or understanding. If they are accidents, then our ways and doings are much the sport of chance. If they are not accidents, then they are arranged events beforehand, and we cannot avoid them. So runs the argument. Anyhow, Frank Morrice, one morning, a few days after the doings of the last chapter, was the sport of chance, or the agent of design. In any case, he did what he did.

He was sitting in the library at The Wick with his father, the conversation varying easily from one subject to another, as it usually does with people happy together,

and confiding in each other, and having no anxiety to out-argue one another. First, it fell on a further letter from Lady Underside, touching the adjourned inquest question, and full of astonishment and inquiries, and impulsive remark and rapid inference, as a lady's letter often is, and ought to be always. And then it varied, by an easy transition, to the improved education of women, which was working a hitherto neglected and almost unknown mine; and then, naturally, to the rights of women, "which, considering that men have no natural rights, but only artificial ones," said the elder Morrice, "can have no other or better basis than those of men; and considering that men have not even a natural right to live at all, except according to the artistic law of society, women cannot show any other right, and so nobody can have any natural right to an artificial right. Universal suffrage right, and

flesh and blood right, being the *reductio ad absurdum* of artistic right." And then it varied back again to Lady Underside, and so to her daughter Anna; and this made Mr. Morrice inquire as to the education and temper of the Lady Anna, the indolent beauty in the stable; and the conversation ended in Mr. Morrice saying, "I wish you would ride up to Richmond, and see Hill, of the 'Star and Garter,' about that wine; he promised to let me have a share with him in a batch of some old port—he is a really good judge of port. Will you ask him about it?" So Frank ordered Quince to be saddled for his ride.

"You'll take care on her to-day, Master Frank," said Dick, in a half-whisper to him, as he was putting his foot in the stirrup at the hall door—"she've been at her tantrums in the yard."

"Oh! that's it, is it, Mistress Quince?"

said Frank. "No hats off to-day, even to Her Majesty, under penalty—uppish a bit, eh ?"

"I don't allow she've been anything much else since she come through the stable door," said Dick. "She've been a-trying to pull the roof off of the ride with her fore feet as she come along."

"Saucy," said Frank, passing his hand down her shining and velvet-coated shoulder, as she stood there with one ear back.

"If you was to give her a couple o' turns over Richmond Park at about three-quarters she'd be all the better for it," said Dick, confidentially.

"She shall have it," and Frank rode out of the gates. So he went by the Strand, and over Kew Bridge, and along by the wall of Kew Gardens, where, in those days, there were the three hundred ships chalked out large on the surface—the wall of the

Fleet, as it was called—and so through the town of Richmond to the hill, and the terrace on the top, towards the "Star and Garter." He had scarcely reached the terrace, and was riding leisurely along at a foot's-pace, and was naturally turning his eyes over the spreading scenery of the river, and the country beyond it, when a little dog started out from under one of the seats placed beneath the trees for the convenience of people using the walk. It was a small brown dog of the terrier breed, and it barked at Quince. Quince jumped and lashed out at the dog. Frank, steadying her, looked hard at the dog. "Why, Pipes," said he—"Pipes, how the deuce do you come here?"

Two female figures, with their backs to the road, and which Frank had not before observed, were sitting on the seat. One of these, hearing the dog bark, and then

the words, started up and looked round.

"Pipes," she said, "come here." And then she stopped short. Frank sat staring at her, and she at Frank.

"Susan!"—the style of her dress so changed her that he hesitated—"Miss Susan!"

Susan was so taken aback by the suddenness of the thing, that she could only feel the blood rush up all over her face. Mrs. Print had risen too, and, looking round, she saw a handsome young man on a restive horse, which was then again rearing, and then kicking, from anger at the onslaught of Pipes and the sudden starting up of the two women, while Susan was blushing to her temples."

"Who is he?" whispered Mrs. Print.

"He is young Mr. Morrice," replied Susan, in a similar voice.

"My goodness gracious! he'll be off!"

said Mrs. Print aloud—"what a horrid wild thing."

Just then Frank persuaded Quince to be better behaved, and to approach the two women.

"I beg your pardon"—he addressed himself to Susan—"for startling you, but I was as much startled as my horse by the unexpected appearance of Pipes. Are you staying here?"

"I am here with my aunt, Mrs. Print," said Susan, recovering herself and looking towards her companion. Frank was afraid to take his hat off, as Mrs. Print made him a rather tremendous obeisance, remembering Dick's warning. So he said, "My mare is very ill-bred, and never allows me to be polite enough to take off my hat to a lady." At the same time he was half inclined to laugh at Mrs. Print's remarkable salutation.

"Oh! that is ill-behaved of her," said

Mrs. Print. "But, my gracious! you should not ride such a wild thing."

"She is my especial favourite," said Frank, "and enormously wicked. I'm half afraid that's my turn of mind. She is deceitful, too, above everything—just like the human heart; and at this moment, when she appears to be quite content with champing her bit and playing with it, if she had her own will she would take poor little Pipes there in her teeth and send him to a premature grave."

While Susan laughed at this sally, Mrs. Print burst out—

"Oh, the wretch! Pipes, you take care, don't you go near her heels. I had a dog once at York, and it would go running after horses—all I could do to scold it—and Print always said—that was my husband—it would come to a bad end some day, and be killed; and so it did. For the Dean was

coming along one day in his carriage—no, it wasn't the Dean, it was Dr. Twang, one of the prebends,—and A. Z.—that was my little dog's name; it was named after a dog of Print's father's, who always said his dog knew the alphabet—A. Z. he ran barking after the Dean's—that is, the prebend's carriage—and a horse came by—one of those horrid, wicked butcher's horses that always go so fast, and run over everything—and he ran over A. Z., and killed him—bang!"

"A more scoundrelly transaction I never heard of," said Frank with a grave voice, while his eyes twinkled. "Pipes, you keep under that seat, out of harm's way." And then, "Are you going to continue your walk here on the terrace?"—addressing Mrs. Print—"Because, if you are, I will go and put up my mare at the hotel and come back to you. I enjoy a walk on this terrace beyond everything."

Mrs. Print saying they were not going home yet, Frank rode off to the "Star and Garter," and left Quince, saying to himself, "I'll give her that gallop, and have a word about the port-wine afterwards." So he returned to the terrace.

Directly Frank was gone, Mrs. Print turned to Susan and said, "Who is he, Susan? Where did you know him? What a handsome young man! And how beautifully he rode that kicking thing! What is his name?"

"He is a gentleman living at a place on the river called The Wick, just below Kew," replied Susan, with her face averted. "Father knows Mr. Morrice."

But Mrs. Print had noticed Susan's blushing face on his first coming up behind them on the seat, and her curiosity was stimulated.

"Ah, yes, that is the place near which

that terrible murder was committed—where the poor young man's body was taken that morning. But you never mentioned this young Mr. Morrice; you only told me of old Mr. Morrice yesterday when we talked about it."

"Didn't I?" said Susan, rather confusedly. "You know, aunt, he had nothing to do with it, only that just the body was carried up to the house—that was all."

"How came your father to know this young gentleman?" said Mrs. Print, who suspected, with her quick eyes and rapid thought, that this was not all.

"Oh! father goes up and down the river, you know, aunt, and he has his orders to see a great many people that live on the river, and he knows numbers and numbers of people."

"But he knew you and your name, and he knew Pipes," continued Mrs. Print, in a

most provokingly inquisitive way. Fortunately, at that moment Pipes ran out on to the road, and barked at another horse, and Susan went after him to scold him; and by the time she got back again to her aunt, Frank came up, and this put off further questions, to the relief of Susan.

"This is a bad time of year to see this view," said Frank, joining them; "it looks bare and cold, but in the spring and summer it is perfection."

"I come up here every day," said Mrs. Print—"it is so charming, even now. I never have seen it in the summer, not since I was quite a young thing, and then I hardly remember anything about it; but I heard of it so often from people who lived at York, and then I read about it; and so, when I lost my husband, I determined to come and live here."

"You live here, then?" said Frank.

"Yes—not long—I'm only just come—two or three weeks—and I do so like it! Sometimes I go into the park, and sometimes I come here—just for a change, you know; and the trees in the park, they are so beautiful, those fine old trees! I do so wish I could draw, and then I could sit down in the long grass and draw them."

"Not just now, Mrs. Print," said Frank —"rather damp."

"Ah! no, not now, because it's wet and cold; but I mean when the summer comes, and the long warm days stretch out, and the sun seems never tired of shining and shining, and making everything beautiful—the trees, and the ferns, and the old stems of thorns, and the hollows where the deer lie about."

"Upon my word, I quite agree with you," said Frank, seeing that, under this little woman's rattling way of talking, there

was a kind of natural eloquence of expression and a taste for scenery.

"I have never seen this park in summer," continued Mrs. Print; "but Print used to take me sometimes to see the great oaks in Homedale Park, near York; and how I did enjoy those days! There was an avenue of them, and they had great gnarled and knotted trunks, and their tops met overhead, and I used to walk along in the shade, like in a great cathedral; and there were the ferns all red, growing up just outside the avenue, and the deer standing about in it; and then I used to tell Print, 'There, now, you go away out of sight and hide yourself behind one of the oaks till I call; don't you come out, because I'm going to forget all about you.' And then I used to sit down on one of the roots of the great oaks, and pull my bonnet over my eyes, and take out my book and read 'The Lady

of the Lake,' and live right away somewhere—oh dear! it was so pleasant! And then it was so tiresome when I had to wake up out of all this, and go and call Print, and go home in the chaise. Print used to say I never recovered this under a day or two."

Frank could not help laughing at the odd compound of romance and reality in his companion; but he said, with sincerity in his tone and manner, "I can quite imagine, from your account, the oak avenue at Homedale Park; and your days there must have been thoroughly enjoyable to you. Everyone enjoys a thing in his own way, and whenever I open 'The Lady of the Lake' I shall think of the oaks. But your husband must have been a capital man."

"Print?—why, of course he was—one of the best men that ever was; and he enjoyed those days, too, in his way—trust him for that—for he used to take out Pope's

Homer, his favourite, in his pocket, and there he would go spouting away behind his oak, marching up and down, while I was sitting down by mine. And then, when I wanted to find him, there he was making a speech—Achilles, or Nestor, or somebody; and then all the way home in the chaise there he was being Hector perhaps, and driving the Greeks to their ships, and killing away at heroes with such names, I'm sure I forget them now—oh! goodness, how he would go on! And sometimes he would give the horse such a bang with his whip when he was Diomed or somebody making somebody else bite the dust—yes, that was it, bite the dust, which, of course, meant killing him, in their way of saying it."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Frank, laughing out. "I would have given anything to be one of that chaise-party to Homedale Park and the oaks."

"I'm reading 'The Lady of the Lake' to Susan, in the evenings," said Mrs. Print, quietly, after a pause.

"Ah! that's your favourite, I see," said Frank. And then, turning to Susan, he said, "There is a great deal of beauty in the poem. Scott was a painter of scenes and scenery. Do you like it?"

"I have never read any book of that kind before," said Susan; "and I think there is a great deal I don't understand yet."

"Of course not," said Frank; "poetry is not like prose, which is generally plain and simple. Poetry is often difficult, and requires study to understand it. The sentences are often so made up of picked and chosen words, meaning much more than they seem to do, and the phrases so short, but so comprehensive, so much said or meant in a short compass, that one is puzzled sometimes to know what they mean."

"That is just what I was thinking yesterday when aunt was reading, that I could not understand it. I think if aunt would read a little, and then tell me what it means, I should like it better."

"Of course I will," said Mrs. Print. "Now this very evening we'll begin at the beginning of the second canto—The Island:—

'At morn the black cock trims his jetty wing;
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay.'

It begins so charmingly, with such pretty images. And then the song:—

'Not faster yonder rower's might
Flings from their oars the spray.'

Susan will like this—she is fond of the water. And then we'll do a bit at a time—read it first, and then explain it."

"I shall like that very much, if it won't tire you, aunt, to teach me. I know so little, I am quite ashamed," said Susan, blushing.

"Everybody must have a beginning," said

Frank; "and I'll be bound that in a few weeks you will know the whole of it a great deal better than I do. If you stay with Mrs. Print, and she goes on in that way, teaching you one book, and then another, I shall ask to be allowed to come and be one of the party, and be taught, too, and be under Mrs. Print, and be her scholar."

"Now you're laughing," said Mrs. Print.

"Upon my honour I am not; and I am sure I should learn a great deal," said Frank; and he could not help a glance at Susan as he said it; and as she caught it, a glowing blush came up upon her cheek.

"I think we must be going home," said Mrs. Print, "it is getting late."

Frank asked to be allowed to walk home with them to their own door, "that he might see where Mrs. Print lived, and so be able to come and pay her a visit some day,

and hear how the readings of the 'Lady of the Lake' went on, and also see some of the passages in Pope's *Homer* which Mr. Print had liked best." He took leave of them at the door of the cottage. Then going up to the "Star and Garter," he spoke to the landlord about the port-wine for his father, and then gave Quince a rattling gallop over Richmond Park, "at three-quarters," as Dick had proposed.

Quince now being quiet after her gallop, Frank had time and leisure to think over his position as he rode slowly home. His thoughts had but one object—Susan. He went over in his memory what he had said to his father about her, and what his father had replied, and he was thoroughly content. He did not conceal from himself her lowly position, or her want of education, and yet no doubt as to his intention towards her rose in his mind. Then the figure of Tom came

on the scene, and he could not help a sensation of satisfaction that the present position of Susan was one which put Tom farther from her, day by day. Also, as he went over the day's adventure, he recalled the expression of evident pleasure in her blushing face when she jumped up from her seat at the sound of his voice and met his surprised gaze. It also struck him that during the walk, while her manner was marked by a modest timidity, there shone in her eyes, whenever they met his, an expression of honest confidingness. In fact, it was evident that Frank was very much in love with Susan, in spite of all social laws, and that he was indulging hopes that perhaps she might really care for him, for himself. Altogether the circumstances of the day were so entire a surprise to him, that he had arrived at home before he had thought out the entirely novel state of things which had occurred.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT was the state of Mrs. Print's mind after the departure of Frank? She went straight to her room, and shut the door; and then, sitting down in an arm-chair, she threw herself back, and declared she must think. "My goodness gracious! here's enough to think about! I can't make it out at all; it's all in a complete maze! Now let me think. Here's a young man—a gentleman, that anybody can see with half an eye, and ever so much above Joe and Susan, with a face as handsome as I don't know what, and manners like a prince! Well, he comes up behind us, and he knows Susan's dog quite well by his name, and he

calls it out, and then up jumps Susan, and turns as red as a herring, and then he calls her Susan at first—I heard him—though he called her Miss Susan afterwards. He then puts up his horse, and comes back to us; and he talks in that easy sort of a know-everything and butter-wouldn't-melt-in-his-mouth kind of a way which those princes have—I know them! When they used to come into Print's shop, and go on in that way with ladies that came in with them, didn't Print and I used to laugh, and then take them off in the parlour! My goodness! how Print used to do it; he was capital at it! I do believe he would have made a first-rate actor, as good as Macready, or Charles Kean, or any of those who used to come down starring it to York. And then that little minx, Susan, to pretend to me that she had told me all about the murder of that young man, when she'd never mentioned

this young gentleman at The Wick, but only the old one—and I daresay there are ever so many more things that she knows, and that she never told me. And then he pretends he'd like to come here and learn from me about the 'Lady of the Lake.' I daresay, Mr. Impudence, you would, and pretty much you'd learn, and pretty much Susan would learn, with you making your speeches, and your fine manners; and Susan as demure as a mouse, and all the time as pleased as Punch. My goodness, here's a pretty kettle of fish! What in the world will Joe say to it all? She said that Joe knows this young spark. I wonder how much he knows of him?—perhaps nothing good—how do I know? Oh, dear me! here's the week only half over, and I'm wishing that it was gone, and Joe was coming to-morrow; and Joe all up the river, somewhere or other—I don't know where.

If he was at Southwark, I'd send to him in a jiffy. I'm sure I don't know what's to be done. When I was out there talking, I really don't know half what I was saying, it took me all so by surprise ; and I'm sure, by his manner, he admires Susan. I dare-say he does—no thanks for that, Mr. Jack-anapes ; you'll find few among your lords and your ladies to beat her, I can tell you —I know them ; and then I declare I don't know but she likes him to admire her—likely enough, keeping that all so secret about him till it came out ; and perhaps, if Pipes hadn't barked, I shouldn't have known a word of all this now. It's extraordinary. And pray what's to come of it all, Miss Minx? I can't tell. Perhaps he'll make her like him ; and then he won't marry her, and she'll break her heart—and there's a pretty job ! I do declare I'm fit for nothing but to go to bed and have a good cry ; and

after my getting her here, and taking all this trouble to have everything for her, and her nice new bonnet and cloak, and her dress and her things, and walks on the terrace, and Pipes, and reading the 'Merchant of Venice,' and everything nice; and then in comes this Mr. Impudence, and sends it all I don't know where. I declare I shan't be able to go anywhere walking without him popping round some corner on us, or riding over us with that nasty kicking thing perhaps; and I can't leave her at home and go anywhere but perhaps he'll be coming here in my absence. Oh! my goodness!" The little woman, in her trouble and the multitude of her fears, burst out in a fit of crying.

After a time, the favourite female solace under difficulties relieved Mrs. Print. Having thus unburdened her mind by drawing a succession of alarming pictures to herself,

she at last finished her thinking; and then, having dried up her tears, decided that she would have a talk with Susan. Then followed in her elastic mind the usual renewal of hope after the action of despair—perhaps it wouldn't be so bad, after all. Under this new self-support—this restoring of the balance of energy—Mrs. Print plucked up her spirits again, and went downstairs to order tea, and have it out with Susan.

What was the burden of Susan's thoughts after the departure of Frank? On reaching her room, she seated herself on the edge of her bed for a moment. Then she went quickly towards the dressing-table, and looked in her glass, smoothed the hair—pretty soft fair hair it was—smoothed it back hurriedly with both hands—thought she heard a noise at the door, and started round, blushing—at what? Well, probably at something in her thoughts as she looked

in the glass, the usually quiet serious eyes no longer quiet or serious, but eager and beaming with a tender light. No one was at the door, and she turned again to her glass, took off her bonnet hastily, and then clasped her hands up to her chin—her own little action when excited—and again looked at the figure in the mirror, and by degrees at some other figure beyond it. Her thoughts ran thus. He said he would come again—in a few days perhaps. Will he come before next week, when father takes me back to Southwark? Perhaps he will. How nice he talked; and how kind he was about my not knowing what was the meaning of the things in the book! I wonder if aunt liked him? I hope she did; he was so handsome and so pleasant in his ways. And he seemed to know all that aunt was saying about Uncle Print, though I didn't; all that about Hector—I wonder who Hec-

tor was? She seems to know so many things. And Pipes—why, if Pipes hadn't barked at his horse, he would have gone by behind us, and we should never have seen him. I wonder if Pipes has had his dinner? I shall always love Pipes better than ever—dear little Pipes! Why, it was his tumbling into the water that made me know him at all—that day—and when Pipes barked, and I jumped up, how surprised I was! I was just thinking of him at that moment, and there he was! How very wonderful! and then I know I blushed so, and he must have seen it—it was so stupid of me. And aunt was so stupid, and said he would fall off. Oh! dear, it was so beautiful of him to come back and walk backwards and forwards, and talk so kindly; and I daresay he had ever so many things to do. And then his coming to hear aunt read, and her to teach him"—(here the

eager eyes sparkled with mirth, and the pretty lips opened with a smile, and showed the least bit of the line of shining teeth);—"he must have been joking. I wonder if aunt saw he was? How nice it would be if he really did come, and aunt read to him and me. I daresay he would know more than aunt"—(here the eyes sparkled again). "His house is not very far from here. I wonder if aunt ever goes on the river?"

How long the above kind of thing would have gone on, Heaven only knows; but at this point of Susan's reverie she heard her name called by her aunt—tea was ready; so she gave a little start, as if she had been caught in the very act of a small crime, and hurried down.

"Why, what have you been doing, child? There you've been for nearly an hour up in your room, and you haven't changed your boots or smoothed out your hair, or

anything. What have you been doing?"

"Oh! I'm so sorry, aunt, I quite forgot my boots—I'll run up and change them in a minute." So, by this little move, Susan escaped out of the explanation. When she came down again Mrs. Print was too intent upon "having it out" with her niece about Frank, to make any further allusion to the matter.

"Now, Susan, I want you to tell me all about that horrid murder over again"—(artful Mrs. Print!)—"I think I should like to go and see the place, though I don't like horrible things at all, and this was a dreadful cruel thing, and Print never would hear of my going to see the people tried for murder at the assizes at York—never, because he said I should be talking of them in my sleep, though I'm sure I don't know why he should say that, as nobody ever said I talked about wicked murderers after

reading of them in the papers when I was asleep on the sofa in the evening when I was tired. It isn't far down the river, is it?"

"It is only a little way beyond Kew Bridge," said Susan.

"Only a little way beyond Kew Bridge —why, that's close by—only a mile or two —suppose we took a boat, you could show me."

"Yes, that I could, aunt," said Susan eagerly.

"Then we'll just go to-morrow if it's fine, and see it. Now, Pipes, you lie down and be quiet; you've had your dinner and now you want more. That's the way with dogs, they never are satisfied. I remember A. Z. that was killed at York was just like that. I do think dogs would eat twenty times a day if you'd give it them. By-the-by, how did that young gentleman to-day come to know

Pipes, for he called him by his name directly?"

"Oh, didn't you know, aunt? He saved Pipes from drowning when he was quite a little puppy." Susan looked into her tea-cup.

"Saved Pipes' life!—how in the world was I to know that? How did he do it?"

"It was in the river one evening, down by The Wick, by the osiers," said Susan, still intent on her tea.

"Well, my dear—now do be quiet, Pipes. Do you want any more sugar in your tea? Now how was it?"

"No, aunt, thank you. It was one evening; the barge was at anchor off The Wick, and somehow Pipes—he wasn't called Pipes then, only the pup—he fell into the water, and we didn't know he was fallen in till Sammy, that's the boy, you know, he came running along the gunwale, and he said

the pup was gone over, for he could not find him, and he was there not a minute before. I was in the cabin with father, so we couldn't hear him cry; but we listened, and presently father said, 'I think I hear him, take the boat, Sammy, and go look for him.' So I jumped in too, and we went down stream after him. As we went on I could hear him ever so far down. It was nearly dark, and there was a foggy kind of mist on the water, and we couldn't see a bit, not a bit, but Sammy sculled on, for we could hear him cry now and then. Well, when we expected we were pretty near him, we couldn't hear him. I thought we could, but Sammy said he was gone down and was drowned. Then somebody called out to us—we could not see anybody—and asked if we had lost anything. So Sammy said we had lost a pup, and he said we were to come to him. When we pulled up there was somebody in the water,

and he came and put the pup into my hands; and then he got in, and he sculled us up to the osiers, and he got on shore and said he lived at the house up there."

"My goodness gracious! and it was him, then. Well, I never did hear anything like that! Then you saw him?"

"No, we didn't, aunt, not that evening; we couldn't, it was so dark and foggy. I couldn't see his face, not when he put Pipes into my hands and got into the boat, not a bit."

"Well, as he was all undressed, child, of course it was better it was dark," said Mrs. Print seriously.

"But, aunt, he had all his clothes on."

"My gracious! all his clothes on!—what! had he jumped into the water after the pup with all his clothes on?"

"I suppose so. I never asked him. I don't know how he came to be there in the

river, but perhaps as he lives close by it he doesn't mind when he goes in it; but there he was, out in the middle."

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Print, in her astonishment, had stopped short, with her tea-cup raised, and let some tea fall on the table. "There, now—I've slopped over ever so much tea. Get a cloth, child, and wipe it up. And so there he was out in the middle. Why, he must have been wet all over head and ears, swimming about there all in the dark. I never heard such a thing in all my life!"

"It was very good of him; don't you think it was, aunt?" said Susan, looking now into her aunt's face.

"My dear, it was what I never should have thought of anyone like him doing. To see him to-day all so spruce, and then to think of his going into the river in the dark with his clothes on after a puppy! I do like

him for that, anyhow. But then you didn't see his face, so how did you come to know him afterwards? And how did he come to know Pipes, if he didn't see him, and only a puppy?"

The colour now came up over Susan's face, which she tried to conceal by stooping down to stroke Pipes' back.

"He came down to the wharf one day soon after that; and there he was talking with Mr. Charles, that manages all about the barges."

"How did you know it was him, child?" said the pertinacious Mrs. Print.

"I'm sure I don't know how it was, aunt. I guessed it was him because he spoke to father, and I thought it sounded like his voice when he spoke to me in the boat that evening."

"Oh! so he came down, did he? And did he ever come again to the wharf?"

"He came once to the barge there," said Susan, rather confused. "He came to say something—to tell us about the murder. I mean, to tell us that something had happened up by his house just when the barge was at anchor by the osiers, and that I was to speak to Tom, who might know something about it."

"Why, my gracious! he seems to have had to do with all sorts of things about you, and the barge, and Tom, and everything. You never told me all this before."

"You never asked me, aunt."

"How in the world was I to ask you about things I knew no more of than the man in the moon? Why, it's quite a romance, I declare! It really is! Here he comes, this young gentleman, one night, all in the dark, in a moment, from some place, nobody knows where, jumps into the river, swims about with his clothes on after a dog

which he couldn't see, and saves it from drowning; and you go out in a boat from Joe's barge, and then he brings it to you, just as if you were the Lady of the Lake; and it's so dark he can't see you, and you can't see him. And then he lives at a great place close by, and he goes off to London to find you out; and then comes a horrid murder close by his place, just near Joe's barge, and then this young spark comes all the way to tell Joe about it because of young Tom; and then there's an inquest, and Joe has to appear, and Tom is suspected, and goes off somewhere. Why, it's quite a romance, my dear."

"It is quite a story, isn't it, aunt?" said Susan, amused at this summary.

"And then to think of his coming here this very day, and finding us out, just because Pipes jumped out from under the seat where we were sitting, talking about all

sorts of things, and making him nearly tumble off his horse, a nasty kicking thing; and supposing Pipes hadn't barked, which he might not have done, for dogs don't always bark at every horse that goes by, though I suppose Pipes is mostways like any other dog, and I do hope he will take warning by A. Z., that was run over and killed; but if he hadn't barked so we might never have seen him!"

"It was quite a chance," said Susan quietly.

"A chance, my dear!—that makes it all part of the romance. If it isn't the most wonderful thing! Here I come from York all the way to Richmond; I find a cottage, and a very comfortable cottage it is, and has closets and things that I like for putting away my linen, and brooms for Hannah to sweep the rooms, which I must say she keeps very clean, only I think I must give

her a lesson some day about corners."

"It is beautiful, I think, aunt," said Susan warmly.

"My dear, I'm glad you find it so; and, as I was saying, here I come from York, and I don't know a living soul, and nobody far and near but Joe; and him I shouldn't have known if I had met him in the street, not from Adam, though I'm sure I shouldn't know Adam if I met him, but then I was expecting to see Joe in the barge; and here you come to stay with me in the cottage, and all of a moment here I am plump down in the midst of a romance, all going on round me—murders, and park walls, and high families, and some of them swimming out in the dark in the river to save dogs from drowning, and meeting people in a boat and never seeing their faces, and coroner's inquests on the murdered body, and a mystery, and nothing found out—it's mar-

vellous how I come into the very midst of it all!"

"Didn't anything, aunt, ever happen at York?" said Susan slily, enjoying the turn the conversation was taking, and instinctively feeling that it was not against Frank.

"York?—yes, all sorts of things happened there, but not like this. I lived there with Print for more than twenty years, and nothing ever was done about him and me like this all in a month. There were two abominable murders, but then they weren't done under park walls of high families, neither of them; and then there was no mystery about them; the wretches were tried and were hanged, and there was an end of them. And one old woman, who washed for Print and me, she fell in a fit one day into her own wash-tub, and was drowned; but that wasn't like this young man swimming out in the dark after your

dog. I'll tell you what we'll do, my dear. To-morrow we'll have a boat, and go down the river, and you shall tell me all about these places. I like to see a place where anything particular has been done. I remember Print and I were going once to see a place in Scotland where the Pretender—you know, the Prince—lived ever so long upon a mountain—concealed, you know. I do love that Charles Edward; so we planned how we'd go. I wanted to go in our chaise, because then we could do as we liked, and carry our dinners with us up the mountain, and stop under a crag if it rained, and put up our umbrellas, and the seats in the chaise could be turned over to keep them dry, and we could sit there under the crag and eat our cold pie, and see the storm go along the mountain and the lightning flash out of the cloud, and hear the thunder go crashing along just opposite;

and then we could picture to ourselves the ancient bards with their harps in the mist, and the phantoms going stalking past; and then there would be the huntsman and the horns and the hounds in the chase going along the heather past us as we sat, with such beautiful echoes, I'm sure—it would have been so delightful, wouldn't it?"

"I daresay it would, aunt," said Susan, feeling quite bewildered with all this imagery, and not knowing whether it was real or not.

"Ah! yes; but poor Print—he used to say it was a long journey from York to Scotland in the chaise, and so we put it off; and then he fell ill, and he never looked up again; but I'm sure it would have been beautiful."

So it was settled to go down the river in a boat on the next day, to see the scene of the romance of Mrs. Print.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Harding parted from his sister and daughter at the water's edge, he had told them to expect him back in a week. But circumstances detained him up the river, and he did not return for nearly another week; so that when he did come, he found Mrs. Print becoming very anxious for his arrival on many accounts. She had heard all those details of the events which connected Frank Morrice with the barge, and she had seen that her brother was ignorant of them. She must communicate them to him. Then, Frank Morrice had paid his promised visit to the cottage, and she had more than half convinced herself

that he was in love with Susan; and also she had nearly half convinced herself that Susan was in love with Frank. This was an amazing discovery, and she must inform her brother of all this, and hear what he thought of it. It is true that the account by Susan of Frank's chivalry, as she called it, in saving Susan's dog—"quite what Malcolm Græme would have done," she declared—had so affected her imagination, combined with his handsome face and person, and his "fine manners," that she was fairly won over to his side. Then, when Frank had paid his visit at the cottage, he had seen how necessary to him was the good opinion of Mrs. Print, and he had behaved with so much kindness and courtesy to her, and had shown such a gentlemanly deference to her comical ways, that the little woman was quite fascinated by him. So now she was ready to go any reasonable length in de-

pendence on Frank's honour, and his intentions towards Susan. But still the little woman, in the midst of her fanciful ways of viewing things, was clear-sighted enough to be sure that she was bound to relate all this to Susan's father. Therefore she was anxious for his coming.

One morning Harding arrived. "Why, Jenny, I've had as much trouble to find ye as a needle in a bundle o' hay. I allow they han't found ye out yet away. I axed yer name in a-many shops, and they didn't know Mrs. Print, not one on 'em."

"Then they're a set of stupids, Joe, and ought to know better. Why, I have a whole lot of things from I don't know how many people. There's the butcher—and I'm sure he ought to know my name pretty well, for I sent his young man away with a flea in his ear only yesterday, for sending me some things that he called sweetbreads—why,

they weren't worth a penny a-piece—little dots o' things no bigger than your thumb; and by the time they were dressed, there wouldn't have been a thing as big as a walnut; and I sent them back to him with my compliments and if he had nothing better than that I hope he'd eat them himself and much good they might do him, and he charging I don't know what for them. Those butchers—they are such a set of mighty fine gentlemen, and make you pay just what they please for their meat, good or bad, prime and coarse, with a whole lot of excuses if you say a word against it; and if you go into their shop, there's my lady comes in with her ribbons, and her smart cap, and her simpering ways, out of her parlour, or dressed up, as you please, as if she was a duchess; and I should like to know where all the money comes from to pay for all those things, except out of

our pockets; and making us pay through the nose for their twopenny sweetbreads, and their young man coming driving by here in his cart at such a rate, just like my Lord Duke, and go right over you if you don't mind, as that horrid man did over poor A. Z., at York."

"Never mind, Jenny, I've found ye at last; and here ye are, as smart as fippence."

"I'm glad you like it, Joe. Does the house please you? I hope it does, and that you like Susan to be here with me."

"Naterally I like it, Jenny. 'Tis above a bit grander than any house Susan was ever in afore as was mine; for her mother and me we never had nothing much above the barge, and that ain't much to brag of in the way o' houses, is it, Jenny?"

"I thought it very comfortable, Joe; and Susan's cabin you had made as pretty as could be, with blue paint, and all that."

"Ah! you allays was one o' the pictur sort, Jenny. I mind me you was fond o' they things in the winder of father's shop, and so I allow they put so many picturs in your head. I allays mind me our mother saying as you never let on long about anything bad. Somehow you soon seed as they warn't so bad. 'Tis a pleasant kind o' natur you have, Jenny, ever since you was a babby. I allow Suz is as happy here as ever she were aboard the barge, and something on the top o' that!"

"Ah! that reminds me, Joe, that I have something to tell you about Susan. She is a dear thing, and I love her more than anything in the world! but, do you know, Joe, she has been telling me all about that horrid, wicked murder, and she knows something that she never told you about it."

Harding looked very grave at this. "Suz knows a bit about that murder more nor

me? What is it, Jenny, what is it?"

Mrs. Print told him what Susan had related to her of Frank coming to the barge, and that she had wished to spare her father the suspicion about Tom, and so she had kept it from him, and Frank had done the same. Harding looked very serious at all this. For the first time he felt a real suspicion about Tom. He was sure that Mr. Morrice never would have come all the way down to Southwark for nothing. He must have known something more of this matter than had yet appeared, or why should he make a secret of it. On considering it over, and recalling the circumstances to mind, he remembered that he could not at the time account for Tom's staying away longer than was necessary to execute the business he had sent him on, and then his total disappearance. Now it was clear that he had had a warning from Mr. Morrice through Susan, and

that he had gone off somewhere instead of coming to the inquest, in consequence, first, of this warning, and, next, because he was afraid of the inquest. Then Mr. Morrice must have known something, and Susan must have known something from him.

As Harding sat there thinking over all this, and trying to unravel it, only in a more simple way than is here written, Mrs. Print had more than once commenced an opinion on the state of things; but Harding had put up his hand, and asked her to be silent, and let him consider the matter, with such a quiet air of earnest command that even she was stopped. Mrs. Print, too, was very fond of her brother, and this affection made her in a degree obedient to his wish. At last he said, "Now, Jenny, I must have a bit of a talk with Suz over all this—just bid the lass step here awhile."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Print, "of course;

but, you see, Joe, you mustn't be angry with Susan. I have been scolding her ever so much all about this, and I'm sure I made myself nearly ill with it all; and if it hadn't been for peppermint lozenges, which always do me good, and a pinch of ginger in my tea, I'm sure I don't know where I should have been many's the time; for I remember, when one of our maids fell downstairs and hurt her spine, and there was old dickery to pay in the house because Print didn't get his dinner, for it was the cook that fell down, and he got nothing for two days that he could eat, the other maid was such a wretched bad cook and burnt everything up to a nub; and luckily, at the end of two days, the stupid doctor found out her spine wasn't hurt a bit; and if it hadn't been for peppermint, and then the ginger, I'm sure I should have been quite ill with the worry of it all."

"Never you mind, Jenny; I shan't hurt Suz with a bit o' talking. Suz is a good girl, and maybe she wanted to keep me from having bad words wi' Tom; and then the lass wasn't so far wrong, for if I'd a-had a mind that Tom had done this, and that young Mr. Morrice, he'd a-knowed anything for certain, in coorse it 'ud a-been a hard matter for me not to speak my mind to Tom, and I couldn't ha' gone afore the inquest and all they men and the crowner and said what I did—in coorse I couldn't; but I must ask Suz if so be she knows what young Mr. Morrice knowed—did she say, Jenny, as she did?"

"Why, no—I don't think she does, Joe. From what I can make out, he never told her, only that she was to tell Tom that something had happened, and warn him; and you see, Joe, that people ought to attend to warnings, for once at York——"

"Jenny," said Harding, stopping her, and cutting short the intended revelation about warnings, "this young Mr. Morrice, he were the gentleman as saved Suz's pup that evening in the river; and I mind he come down to wharf one day soon arterwards, though I didn't know him then, but I see a bit further on as 'twas him; and then he comes down again to the barge along o' that warning to Tom. I don't but say as I were obligated to him for what he did about Suz's pup, and so I were, and I allow it were more nor I'd look for any gentleman like him a-doing of, but I bain't clear why he come down to wharf, and then again, as you says, about Tom—eh, Jenny?"

"That is just what I wanted to speak to you about, Joe. Susan has been telling me all about this young gentleman, and he has been here, and he came riding one day up to the top of the hill by the terrace, you

know, where Susan and I were sitting down on a seat, and Pipes barked at his horse, and his nasty kicking horse kicked at Pipes, and there was a fine to-do. And then he came and walked with us for ever so long, till we came home here; and he has been here once since, and I'm sure it's all about Susan; and I've been in a peck of troubles about it all, and I wanted you ever so much for ever so many days; but now I think I am more at my ease than I was about it, though I am very glad you've come, Joe, for I wanted you to know all about it; and I'm sure I don't know what you'll think of it."

"What be it all, Jenny? In coorse if Pipes barked and frought his horse it was nateral he'd see you and Susan, and as he'd seed Susan afore down at Southwark, it were what a gentleman'd do, and after saving her pup, just to speak to her. But what put you so much about, Jenny?"

"Why, my dear Joe, don't you see? This young spark—he comes gallivanting here on his kicking thing about Susan. I like him very much, and his jumping into the water, and all that; and he's quite a gentleman with his fine manners and his ways. But then he's a gentleman, and Susan—though she is as pretty as can be, and there ain't many can hold a candle to her among your lords and ladies, she ain't quite a lady, you know, Joe—not like him, you know. I'm sure he thinks her as pretty as I do, and he shews it; and I dare-say he would marry her. But suppose he didn't, Joe?"

"What, Jenny!" exclaimed Harding—"what be you a-talking of? Marry her! Young Mr. Morrice marry Susan! Why, what can you be a-talking of? 'Tain't sense, Jenny. However can you give in to sich a hidee as that?"

"Well, Joe, it does seem a most extraordinary thing, doesn't it? But as sure as ever you sit there, he's dreadfully in love with her—that I'm sure of. You should just see them together—there he's as soft as pap to her, and there's Susan——"

"Jenny, I be main sorry to hear all this, that I be," said Harding, standing up and moving towards the door; "this here must be set to rights without no more time—there ain't no sense in it, Jenny; and you must jest let Suz come home along o' me and the barge at onst. I am sorry to be so short with Susan's visit, but will you please to tell her so."

"My goodness gracious, Joe, you don't mean to say you want to take Susan away now—this very minute?"

"Yes, I do, Jenny. You see, 'tis all wrong as you're a-telling me—there bain't a grain o' common sense in the whole bis-

ness. Our Susan marry young Mr. Morrice! Why, you must be beside yourself, Jenny, to pictur this! This comes o' yer making so many picturs o' things and making things contrairy to what they be. Anybody can see wi' half an eye as this ain't according. What 'ud people say o' me if I were to give in to this and nobody knowing nothing at all about it, and Mr. Morrice, the gentleman up at The Wick, all in the dark, d'ye see, and you and Suz up here a-carrying on with young Mr. Morrice, and me in the barge a-shutting my eye and making as if I didn't see nothing on it, and all the blessed while a-knowing on it? 'Tis as plain as the nose in your face, Jenny, as it ain't according, nohow you can work it."

During this speech, which Harding made as he stood with his hat in his hand on his way to the door, speaking rather angrily, Mrs. Print had got between him and the

door, and now stood with her back to it, and kept it shut.

"Joe, you shan't say a word to Susan while you speak in that manner. You'll just frighten her to death, and there we shall have her fainting perhaps, or something dreadful, and a pretty to-do that will be. Why, what will she think? Here she comes to my cottage, and I'm sure I'm as glad to have her here as anything, and I've got all her nice things for her, and her room and things in it, and her bonnet and her cloak and all sorts, and books, and getting on with her reading them quite beautifully, and then, just because a young gentleman comes and sees us, her and me, here's to be a topsy-turvy of everything. Now, Joe, you sit down and be reasonable, and be a good old Joe, as you always were when you had the sparrow and the dormouse in your pocket, and never could bear to hurt any-

thing; and here you are going to hurt Susan in every way you can, and me too, and make us both just as ill and as miserable as anything; and a pretty time you'd have of it if you took her away now, for there she'd be on the barge fit for nothing but to cry her eyes out, and shut herself up in that cabin, which you made as pretty as you could, of course, but then it isn't a house, you know; and just as she's got her dress and her bonnet—and she couldn't wear any of her things on board the barge, not one; and what I should do when Susan was gone but just go to bed and stay there with the clothes over my head, and shouldn't have a word to throw to a dog, but a splitting headache, and the house just as still as if somebody was dead in it! Oh! you couldn't do this, Joe—it wouldn't be like you! Oh dear! oh dear!" And the little woman, seeing Harding's face not a bit relenting under her

appeal, and overcome with the picture of her accumulated woes, burst into a fit of crying, and gradually sank down on the floor, and threw herself on the carpet, and, with her head in her hands, fairly sobbed out in a paroxysm of grief.

Poor Joe! The worthy and honest man, intending to do the right thing and the honourable thing, in his blunt and simple way, by Susan and by Mr. Morrice of The Wick and by himself, found himself suddenly confronted by his sister Jenny, doubled up on the carpet in a storm of tears, between him and the door. What could he do with this position of affairs? The heart of the man, who had as a boy carried the dormouse about in his waistcoat pocket—to which Mrs. Print had alluded in so timely a way in her appeal—gave way, and his high and just resolves melted away—as many other high and just resolves have melted

before, and will again—before a weeping figure at his feet. So Harding gave a clutch or two at his hat with both hands, and then he turned away in silence, and walked a couple of steps back into the room, and nothing was heard for a minute but the sobs of Mrs. Print. Then Harding's voice changed from the angry tone to the usual cordial and hearty sound, as he said,

"There now, Jenny, don't take on, don't you take on like that! Get up, there's a lass, and let's have a talk. Blest if I know what's to be done—but come and have a talk."

Under the influence of the old accustomed tone of voice and the words, Mrs. Print first sat up and sobbed behind her handkerchief quietly to herself, leaning against the door; then, feeling quite safe that her brother would not go out of the room for Susan, but would stay and talk, she got upon her

feet in a languid way, and came towards Harding. Seating herself on the sofa she made him sit down by her. After a few more sobs at intervals Mrs. Print recovered herself.

"You dear old Joe, how you frightened me! You are the best old creature that ever was, but you gave me such a fright. I don't know what would become of me if" —here a last parting convulsive sob—"if you had carried off Susan. She's a dear thing, and I am very fond of her, and so are you, I know, and everybody must be; and then to go and break her dear pretty heart with all in a moment doing this!"

"Well, well, Jenny, she shan't go away to-day—maybe in a week or so—there ain't no harm done yet but what can be mended." This was a reprieve, and Mrs. Print felt it to be so.

"You see, Joe," she began, in a mourn-

ful voice, "I can't help old Mr. Morrice if his son chooses to take a fancy to Susan. I don't see a bit why I am to take care of him and his family, nor you either, Joe. I'm sure he's got plenty of ways to take care of himself, with his carriages, and his horses, and his big house, and his gardens, and everything, and I'm sure they are enough for any gentleman to take care of his affairs; and we have only this cottage, and there's your barge, and I've nobody but Hannah here just to take care of the house and make things comfortable and tidy, and put away the linen, and sweep the carpets, and do our little bit of cooking, and so on; and why Mr. Morrice can't make things in his family go on as he likes just as I do, is extraordinary. If his son does not like any of those young ladies in London who go about in their carriages and their silks and their satins, and dress themselves

in their gold necklaces and their diamonds, and their ways all like princesses, with their dancing on their tiptoes, why, I can't help it. I don't see that it's my fault at all that he doesn't. I'm sure I don't prevent him. He can go off to London if he likes on his kicking thing, and ride it in the park, where I daresay there are no Pipeses allowed to go barking at gentlemen's horses; and there he can do as he likes with the young ladies in their bonnets, and their cloaks, and their fandangos; but if he likes to come here instead, and sit down in this little cottage, and read the 'Merchant of Venice,' as he did the other day, and hear what Print's opinion was about places in the play, why, then, why am I to be made to cry, and Susan too, and all our little things to be sent to the right-about?"

"But, Jenny," said Harding kindly, "all that I don't say nothing against, every man

takes care on himself, and in coorse Mr. Morrice, of Wick, he does the same as t'others. However, it strikes me that he shouldn't be kep' in the dark about this. Put it this way, Jenny; if anybody was to know anything bad as was a-coming to Susan—anybody as knowed you or me, d'ye see, and he kep' it out o' sight, kep' mum, d'ye see, didn't say nothing, and let it come—you and me, we should be terrible put about with him as didn't say to we, look out, afore it come as he knowed it were a-coming—shouldn't us, Jenny?"

"Of course we should; and he'd better not come in my way afterwards, or he'd get such a sessararo as he'd never forget all his life. Joe, I think I should throttle him outright."

"That's it, Jenny. Here's Mr. Morrice here at Wick, and may be he sights it jest the same about his son as you and me about

Susan; and if I knowed something bad about him, I'd be obligated to tell him on it. That's about the rights on it, Jenny, ain't it?"

"Oh! of course, Joe, if that is what you mean; though I cannot, for the life of me, see how it can be anything very bad for any man to like Susan—that is, not—ah!—oh! Joe, I see what you mean—yes, he might think so—of course—oh! dear me, what a plague these sort of things are! But I daresay old Mr. Morrice, as wise and as particular as ever he may be about his son and all that, and wanting him to marry some one of those princesses up there in London, with her silks and her satins and her rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, and all that,—I daresay he's many a-time thought that a pretty face is a pretty face, and wish he was free to choose. I'll be bound he has, and no blame to him for

it, or he wouldn't be above half a man for my money. Now, you see, there is this young Mr. Morrice—I'm sure he's dreadfully in love with Susan—only look at all his ways of——"

"Maybe, Jenny—maybe he's fullish—many on 'em be fullish, and the best on 'em, I've heard say; but that don't make crooked into straight, do it? Here be this gentleman, he be one of they tip-top ones, and if his son be fullish, that don't sinify. I'm not a-going to let him say to me, 'Harding, you knowed this here about my son and your dorter, and you should ha' telled me on it, as a decent man should do.' I ain't a-going to let any man say that to me, not if he wer' the king upon his throne, Jenny; and so I must go to him at onst, and tell him, and then I'd sleep easy, d'ye see."

"Now, Joe," said Mrs. Print, "don't you be silly—you really must have done ever

so many silly things in all this time that I haven't seen you—now you are going to make me a promise, and if you don't make it, I'll tell you what I'll do; I shall lock you up in this very room, and here you'll stay; and you shan't have anything to eat or drink for the whole day and night, and more, too, so you had better make it, like a good old Joe."

"Nonsense, Jenny," said Harding, laughing; "how you do talk about promises and locking up—why, I must be at wharf afore many hours is by; and the tide'll be on the turn in another half hour or so. But what is your promise? Can't make they sort o' things afore I knows what they be. Mustn't tie my hands and legs myself, d'ye see, Jenny, must I?"

"Well, Joe, I'll tell you what it is. You must promise me that you won't go to The Wick and see Mr. Morrice yet—not for a

week—mind, not for a week; and then, if you are downright determined to go, then you shall go; but—and now I'll make you a promise—I promise that I will see young Mr. Morrice—that is, of course, if he is at home at The Wick—before the week is over, and I will ask him if his father knows anything about this—about his coming here, and about Susan, you know, eh?—about his thinking her pretty and admiring her, you know; and if he does not, then you shall do as you like, and go to him; but if he does, Joe, if he does?—suppose young Mr. Morrice has told him?"

"That'll do, Jenny," said Harding, cheerily, "that'll do. I'll promise that, and I'll bide by it, if so be you'll bide by yourn. And there's a kiss for you, Jenny, to bind it. You was allays true, and so you'll be now."

"Dear old Joe!" said Mrs. Print, her

eyes full of tears now with contentment. "Only suppose if young Mr. Morrice has gone to his father, and asked for leave about Susan—leave, you know, to come courting her!"

"Lor, Jenny! How your head do run away with you all in a moment!"

"But, Joe, how do you know? How do I know? Suppose young Mr. Morrice has gone to him and said, 'My dear father, I want to marry—and that's the natural thing for young men like me—and I don't care for money, and riches, and diamonds, and coaches of gold, but I like a young woman above everything else in the world. I don't care for those fine princesses up in London in their ivory palaces, with their estates, and their money in the three per cents. and the four per cents., and their waggon-loads of silver plate, and their gold plate like the Lord Mayor's, and their silks, and their glass

slippers like Cinderella's, and their eyes like diamonds shining, and their necks like the swan's of alabaster, not I; but I care for a young woman more beautiful than all the others put together, and who is more to me than rubies and pearls, and stones from Golconda and Peru, and than shawls from Bendermeer's stream; and if you were to see her, I'm certain sure you would be in love with her yourself, over head and ears; and if you don't mind about her name being Susan Harding, daughter of the very best man that ever lived, and who lives on the River Thames, and who isn't a prince nor yet a lord, but he's got a heart bigger and better than that of any lord in the land—then, if you will say yes, I shall be as happy as the day is long; and, who knows? we may have a very beautiful family!'"

"Oh, dear me!" said Harding, throwing himself back on the sofa, and laughing aloud,

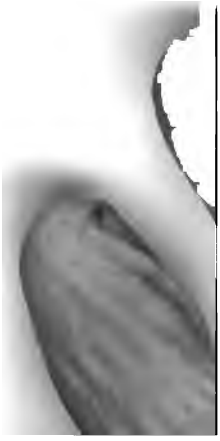
"you do beat anything for picturs ever I heerd in all my born days. They sort o' gentlefolk don't say they sort o' things, Jenny, never—'tain't in reason! I've a-talked to gentlemen afore now, here and there, and they talks quite easy and plain like, and says, 'How d'ye do'? and so on, quite nateral. They don't bounce, Jenny, like that."

"Never you mind, Joe. When I was at York, and Print used to have those Cathedrals and so on come in and talk, I've heard them say such things all about foreign parts, and crowned princes, and so on. But never you mind, never mind how young Mr. Morrice says it to his father about Susan, if he only tells him all about it, and if the old gentleman doesn't say No, when young Mr. Morrice tells him; and if he tells me that his father knows all about it, that will be all right, won't it, Joe?"

"If I be sure on it," said Harding, gravely, "quite sartain sure as Mr. Morrice of Wick knows about his son a-coming here and seeing Susan, and that he's a-courting on her, and he's agreeable, and he don't say No, and it's all in a reg'lar way—though I can't bring my mind to that way o' thinking, nohow—but if so be as 'tis so, then, Jenny, I haven't a word more to say, and if Suz is content. And now I'll jest have a word with the lass, and give her a kiss afore I goes, for the tide'll be about turning by this time, and I must be getting down stream for Southwark."

So Mrs. Print led her brother into another room, where Susan was. How very natural and common to the sex is the desire to have a hand in a little arrangement of this kind; and also how very natural and common to the sex is the desire to keep the other sex from meddling with it! Men are

such blundering creatures, and so stupid—they would be sure to spoil it, is, of course, the opinion of women.



CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Harding arrived at Southwark, he thought it right to communicate to his employers what he had learned the day before from his sister at Richmond of the circumstances of the murder, of which he was ignorant before. He therefore went to the office and saw Mr. Charles, and told him of young Mr. Morrice having come down to the barge, and of his seeing his daughter on the day succeeding that of the finding the body of Robert Tapps in the osiers, and of his giving her that warning for Tom, which he related. Mr. Charles asked him if he at all knew what had caused Mr. Morrice to bring that warning; and this

Harding was unable to tell him; for his daughter, on his speaking to her on the point at Richmond on the previous day just before leaving the house, had been unable to tell him. She only knew that Mr. Frank Morrice had come, and had said those words, "that something had happened by the creek, and Tom would know what to do if he knew about it."

It was evident to Mr. Charles and to Harding that Mr. Frank Morrice was acquainted with something more—but what was that more? It was debated between them whether they should take any step in the matter—whether they should speak to Mr. Frank Morrice, and ask him what he knew of the murder which had caused him to come down and give that warning. But neither of them liked to do this. If he only knew from some one that it was the "Columbine" lying up there by the osiers

on that afternoon, and so arrived at the suspicion that it was Tom, then they would learn nothing. If Mr. Morrice really knew anything more positive, and if he would tell them—which he probably would not, considering the silence he had observed until then, all through the time of the two inquests—then they would be almost called on to attempt to discover Tom, or communicate this to the magistrate. But did they wish, either of them, to discover the young fellow, or hand him up to justice? For instance, if he were now, to their knowledge, in his uncle's house at Greenwich, and they knew from Mr. Morrice that he had proofs of his having been directly concerned in this crime, would they, Mr. Charles and Harding, inform the magistrate of the fact? When the two men had brought themselves to this point in the debate, they both recoiled from this position at once. No, they

could not do that, neither of them. Harding had promised his mate, Plank, that he would help the boy. Would this be to help the boy—to try to get him hanged? Harding shrank from it as if he had been stung. Mr. Charles felt for Harding, and, besides, he had himself employed the young man. He, too, put away from him the idea of aiding to criminate Tom. He had at one time believed him to be innocent—thoroughly believed he was so; and afterwards, when Tom had disappeared, and did not face the inquest, even then he only half suspected his guilt. Now he quite suspected it. If circumstances had at the time forced him and Harding to appear against Tom, they must have submitted; but now they were not compelled in any way to act in this matter—they had no proof. If they had proof, would they act? No, they would

not. Then why try to obtain proof by going to Mr. Frank Morrice?"

The debate ended in the two men resolving that they would not go to Mr. Morrice and ask him any question on the matter. If Tom kept away, then they would be silent. If he should come back any day, there would be time enough to warn him of what they suspected him, and urge him to clear himself if he could. So they left the question, and Harding went about his business of the barge as usual. Tom was gone, and the subject dropped out of sight.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was a few days after the visit of Harding to his sister, and before the week was out during which Mrs. Print had promised to speak to Frank, that the latter rode over from The Wick to Richmond.

Mrs. Print was meditating a note to him to ask him to come, when he arrived. His ostensible reason for going was to take a choice flower—a sprig of Gardenia from The Wick conservatory—to Mrs. Print, but really for Susan, and to ask the little woman some question about York Cathedral. He had found by accident a small engraving of the Cathedral in a portfolio, and it struck him that as he knew nothing of the interior,

and had never been at York, it would be a good excuse for a visit to inquire of the ever-ready and voluble little woman about it. So he rolled this up and carried it in his hand, with the flower inside the roll. He found the two occupants of the cottage at home.

It was early in January, the weather was frosty, and Frank arrived in the afternoon at the cottage. Mrs. Print and Susan had been out for a walk in the morning, and they were sitting by the fire in the pretty little drawing-room, working and talking. On a small table by the side of Mrs. Print was lying a book. It was a volume of Shakespeare, open at "The Taming of the Shrew." Frank sat down on the other side of the little table by the fire, and opened his engraving of York Cathedral and took out the sprig of Gardenia. Susan sat opposite, with the larger table between her and

her aunt. The refined scent of the flower filled the little room, to the great delight of Mrs. Print, while Frank contrived to let Susan understand, by some magic of look or movement, that the flower was for her.

How pretty she looked on that January afternoon, in her simple dress of dark blue serge, with her fair hair put back off her temples and twisted up in a coil behind. Frank thought the little head looked like that of the Venus of Milo. The pretty serious eyes had a happy light in them, as she understood that the flower was for her. Her aunt was soon occupied in talking to Frank about York Cathedral; and Susan, in a noiseless way, stole out of the room, and in a few minutes returned with a narrow, long-necked glass with water in it. Placing it on the table between herself and her aunt—the least bit nearer to herself of the two, but not near enough to make it appear

like appropriating it—she put the sprig into it, and then quietly seated herself, without a word.

"There now!" exclaimed Mrs. Print, "I think now you know all about the interior of York Cathedral. And that reminds me that when I was at York, I had been reading one day after breakfast some of 'The Taming of the Shrew,' to Print, and then at dinner. Print was very fond of that play; and there he would go spouting sometimes in the morning in the little garden, that part in it where Petruchio comes to Padua, to woo and marry Kate, and he says—let me see—I forget—here's the book—yes, this is it:—

'Why came I hither but to that intent?
Think you a little din can daunt my ears?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puffed up with winds,
Rage like an angry boar chafèd with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field?
And Heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?

Have I not in a pitchèd battle heard
Loud larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang?
And do you tell me of a woman's tongue?'

How Print did spout these lines! I'm sure he ought to have been an actor, or a warrior, he was so fond of marching and battles; and that day at dinner he wanted me to be Kate, and him Petruchio. 'Nonsense,' said I, 'I can't be Kate. I don't know what wicked stuff she would say.' 'Oh,' said he, 'say anything, and do anything. My bonny Kate, my super-dainty Kate!' 'Stuff,' said I; 'Print, I can't.' But he would have it, and so I said, 'Oh! you beetroot-faced porker!'—poor Print, he was thin and pale—'oh! you beetroot-faced porker, you carrot, you inside of a watermelon, how dare you call me bonny and super-dainty—take that, you pennyworth of alecampayne,' and I threw an orange at his head—there was a plate of oranges on the

table just before me, and one was beginning to go a little—just a little blue mildew coming, you know—and I had cut this open, and it came plump on his face, for he didn't expect Kate to be so well acted; and the mildew part came exactly on his chin, and it went squash all over his mouth, and down over his poor dear white neckcloth —for Print had been in the morning to some meeting about women being educated better, and he always wore his white neckcloth at those meetings, and looked like a canon; and he told me one gentleman talked about making housemaids learn mathematics, and I thought they had much better be learning how to darn stockings—much more useful; and another wanted them to learn all about physic, and cutting off arms and legs—why, good gracious! just fancy our Hannah knowing about physic —she'd never let me eat my dinner in peace,

but she'd be watching every morsel I put in my mouth, and some day she'd see me take something wrong, and say right out, 'That'll stick in your gizzard, ma'am, as sure as I can say 'Jack Robinson;' and then, if she knew about pills, and she saw Susan looking pale, she'd say——"

"Oh! never mind me, aunt," said Susan; "never mind Hannah."

"But I shall mind you, child. Why do you interrupt me in that way? If Hannah saw you——"

"Mrs. Print," said Frank, coming to the rescue of Susan from Hannah's exhibition of her case, "I really do agree with you as to housemaids learning mathematics, or cooks either—so much more useful darning the stockings."

"Of course it would. Why, if our cook at York had been taught mathematics, some day or other, when Print and I were want-

ing our dinner, and as hungry as hunters, there I should have gone into the kitchen and found cook sprawling on her stomach on the floor, marking out lines, and corners, and angles, and all sorts, with her finger, in the sand on the kitchen stones, and then our box of Roman capitals in the other hand, and putting down a B at one corner, and a C at another, and D at a third, and the alphabet all over the kitchen."

"Ridiculous!" said Frank, while he and Susan laughed out together at the little woman's picture. "Perfectly absurd! You can't dine on mathematics, can you, Mrs. Print? That is, not heartily!"

"My gracious! no. How you do talk, Mr. Morrice! A pretty house ours would have been, with Print spouting about loud larums, and neighing steeds, and trumpets' clang, in the morning, up and down the garden before breakfast, and then in the

middle of the day, with somebody in the shop killing Hector, or Hector killing somebody else there at Troy; and then, at dinner, me being Kate, and Print sitting there as Petruchio with his face all over orange, and down into his poor dear white neckcloth; and then to have the woman into the bargain, crawling about on her stays all over the kitchen floor with her mathematics and her Roman capitals, instead of doing the mutton, all roasted up to a chip."

"Quite dreadful to think of and contemplate," said Frank, much amused. "We had a man at The Wick, a footman, who was an odd genius. He had been a baker's lad once, and at another time in a strolling band, and could play on the French horn. He was not a bad fellow at all, only when he was wanted to help to lay the cloth for dinner, or for any other of his footman's duties, he was sure to be either playing the

French horn out in some corner of the premises, to a select assemblage of the stablemen, and couldn't be found, or else in a very dishevelled condition as to clothing, all among pies and biscuits and all sorts, in the back kitchen, deep in baking, and his pantry neglected. That was bad enough, but it was not mathematics."

"What a man!" said Mrs. Print. "I daresay he spouted between the pies. He did't stay long with you, I'll be bound!"

"Well, no," said Frank. "Such an erratic genius soon went off of his own accord. He said there was nothing in service to expand his intellect. I have an idea he thought the House of Commons was his proper sphere —which, you know, is the place where everything is managed by genius."

"What stuff!" said Mrs. Print. "I'm sure I hope not."

"But you were talking of Kate and the

Taming of the Shrew, Mrs. Print. Here is a charming little short passage, I am sure you will admire it. I will read it.

> 'I saw her coral lips to move,
> And with her breath she did perfume the air:
> Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her.'

Is not that a perfect little picture of a woman, in such a small compass, and yet containing all things? You cannot add to it!"

"Yes, they are lovely lines," said Mrs. Print. "I remember learning them by heart when I was young, and I used to repeat them to myself. They were not said of Kate, but of Bianca. How pretty she must have been!"

"I think the words 'sacred and sweet' express more than prettiness," said Frank. "What do you say, Miss Susan?"

Susan was a little confused at being suddenly appealed to, but presently she said diffidently, "I don't think I know much about

poetry; but when aunt read those lines a little while before you came in, I thought of something prettier than any lady I ever saw —of that figure of the angel in that picture." And she pointed to an engraving on the wall of the room.

"That is very appropriate," said Frank, looking at Susan; "but I think I shall stop short of the angels. 'Sacred and Sweet' are words which convey the image of a graceful, almost a holy countenance, and a loving spirit speaking in Bianca's eyes."

"'I saw her coral lips to move,'" Mrs. Print repeated; "the sweet thing! I wonder if her eyes were brown, or blue, or black?"

"I'm sure they were not black; 'sweet and sacred' must mean soft, and black eyes are generally sparkling, fiery. What do you think they were?" Frank looked across at Susan.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Susan laughing; then, giving her head a little jerk, a customary action with her on occasions, and which we remember on board the barge when she termed her first suspicion about Frank thinking of her as "nonsense"—"perhaps they were green."

"How absurd you are, Susan!" said Mrs. Print. "Whoever heard of green eyes? except those of the monster, who of course wasn't a monster any more than you are a monster, only one of those poet's invented things. To be sure the young green of the apple leaf, and also of the beech leaf, is very pretty to look at out of doors in May; but then no one would wish a child to have eyes a sort of a yellowish colour, as those leaves have."

"I can tell you the colour of Bianca's eyes," said Frank, "and I defy you, Mrs. Print, to deny it or to disprove it: they

were of a deep blue, with the least tinge in the world of violet in them."

Mrs. Print looked up quickly at that moment from the book on the table at Susan, and it suddenly struck her that that was the exact colour of Susan's eyes. "Why, child!" she exclaimed, "that's precisely the colour of your eyes—how very odd! But how do you know you're right, Mr. Morrice? Where do you find in the play anything about it?"

"I know I am right," said Frank gravely; "because, in the first place, you cannot find any passage that says I am wrong; and then I know I am right, because, if you read the whole play through in the spirit in which it ought to be read, and consult the hidden meaning of it, and develop the sense of the passages, and meditate upon the persons described, and enter into the parts played by the several characters, and look at the ideas expressed by Bianca, and con-

sider those poured forth by Kate, and penetrate the mind of Baptista the father, and clearly substantiate the difference in your innermost convictions between Bianca's turn of figure and that of Kate, and perceive—"

"My goodness gracious! Mr. Morrice, how you do go wandering on among all sorts of words and fancies and argumentatious confabulations to prove about Bianca's eyes, and not a word have you said—" Just at this instant she caught sight of Susan in a convulsion of some sort behind her work, which she was holding up with quivering hands before her face under a pretence of examining it; for the young girl had caught Frank's eye when about half-way through the grave enumeration of reasons for the colour of Bianca's eyes, and had seen the absurdity of them, though she only about half understood what they all meant. "What in the name of goodness is the matter with

the girl? Are you ill, child?" Then, jumping up, she dashed at the uplifted handkerchief, and tore it down, and there was Susan in a convulsion of laughing. "There, now, I knew you were talking nonsense, Mr. Morrice. You know no more of the colour of Bianca's eyes than the man in the moon. You just happened to see Susan's, and then you made up all that nonsense in a minute. That's just what one of the canons used to do at York—he would come into Print's shop as grave as a judge, and then some one would ask him some question about a book, or a horse, or a donkey, or a caterpillar, or anything, no matter what; and then he would begin giving his opinions, and he'd go off to Africa for them, and then he'd come back to the High Street in York, and then he'd go off again to China, or the planet Jupiter, and down again into our kitchen perhaps—oh! dear, how he would

make Print stare—and there are you doing just the same."

"I didn't go quite to Africa, Mrs. Print, now did I, Miss Susan? You bear me witness," said Frank, smiling.

"I don't know quite where you went, for you said so many things; but I didn't think you went to Africa—not quite," said Susan, laughing.

"There, now, Mrs. Print. And I didn't go to Jupiter—upon my word I never was in Jupiter in all my life—I wasn't, really."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Print. Just then tea came in, and Mrs. Print dispensed it.

"Now I want to show you a beautiful part of this play," said Frank, taking up the book, and turning over the leaves—"here it is—just at the end. I think it so sensible of Kate; and then it is such beautiful language, and the lines so fine."

"Now don't you begin again as you did

before, Mr. Morrice," said Mrs. Print, "saying all those wonderful things that Susan and I couldn't make head or tail of. You might just as well have gone to Africa at once, and Jupiter too, for anything we could make of it all."

"No, no," said Frank, laughing, "this is all good plain sense and fine poetry. Now let me read it to you. We are told in the play that Kate is conquered, the shrew tamed—no more oranges, you know, Mrs. Print—Kate is become a charming person, amiable and beautiful, like—like—well, like a beautiful, amiable person always is." Frank, as he said this, threw a rapid glance at Susan, which that young person somehow was aware of, judging by a peculiar quick tremor of her eyelids, though she did not look up from her work. So he began:—

"Fie! fie! unknit that threatening, unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.

It blots thy beauty, as frosts bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable.
A woman moved is like a fountain troubled—
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will dain to sip, or touch a drop of it."

"Isn't that good, Mrs. Print—plain and sensible enough?"

"Of course," said she—"anyone understands that. A wife out of humour looks ugly, like muddy water. I daresay I was muddy enough sometimes."

"Not a bit of it, Mrs. Print," said Frank; "there was more sparkle than mud in your life, I'll be bound. But then again—

'To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
While thou lie'st warm at home, secure and safe,
And craves no other tribute at thy hand,
But love, fair looks, and true obedience.'

Is not this just what should be for happiness? Women should be soft and kind, shouldn't they, Mrs. Print? We men do the hard part of the world, and the women

should do the soft part. Can't be all hard, can we? All hard and no soft, how could the world go on—could it?"

"My goodness! no. I could no more do what men do, or Susan either. How in the world could Susan go about building houses, like those people down our road, and carrying up those ladders those things of mortar and bricks?—why, she could no more do it than she could fly in the sky."

Frank and Susan both laughed out at the picture presented to them of Susan mounting a tall ladder with a hod of mortar on her shoulder.

"You see, Bianca in the end," said Frank, "became wilful and headstrong from being spoiled, and then she was not half as charming, even with her pretty eyes, for she says Kate did a foolish duty in obeying Petruchio; and then Bianca's husband blames her and says—

'I would your duty were as foolish too—
The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,
Hath cost me an hundred crowns since supper-time.'

So, you see, Kate became pretty and charming, and Bianca lost her charm by her ill-humour."

"How stupid of her!" said Mrs. Print.

"Shakespeare used such capital language," said Frank. "It is a little old-fashioned now, and reads stiff in parts; but what is prettier than 'morning roses newly washed with dew?' His images are so natural and so true, and the words chosen with so much knowledge of their exact worth. He never says apparently one thing and means another, as some writers, who are so involved that it is difficult to make out what they mean. But I think I must be going home," and Frank rose from his chair. "You will be tired of my long visit, and all this about Shakespeare."

Mrs. Print declared she was not tired a

bit; and Susan somehow did not look in the least fatigued, but parted from Frank, as he took her hand, with bright eyes and a rather heightened colour on her cheek.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. PRINT had not forgotten her promise to her brother. She followed Frank out of the room, and invited him into another.

"If you please, Mr. Morrice, would you stop a minute?—I want to speak to you about something. My brother, Harding, was here the other day." Mrs. Print shut the door, and made Frank sit down. "Dear old Joe!—the best man that ever was!—and he liked the cottage so much, and said it was so pretty and comfortable—quite grand, he called it. You know him, don't you, Mr. Morrice?"

"Oh! yes, I know Harding. A capital

man! Just the kind of man I like. Straightforward and sensible. See it in his face!"

"That's what I say," said Mrs. Print. "Everybody can see Joe is as good a man as ever lived, and he'll come here and see me very often, whenever he can, and the barge will let him; but, as he says, the barge comes first, as of course it ought, because that's his business, and Susan and I come afterwards. And Susan has been telling me all about that horrid, dreadful murder down by the creek—it really was dreadful!—and I went down with Susan in a boat to see the place. My gracious! and there were other people there looking at it; and it was all such a surprise to me, for there I came down from York as innocent as a lamb about it all, and knowing that this was a beautiful place—Richmond, I mean—I came here believing fully that everything went on here just the same as in other places—people

living like everywhere else, having their breakfast, and their toast, and their tea, and sometimes an egg—for people say they are bilious, if you eat them every morning—and then their dinner, and many people have their tea at four o'clock—and I daresay you do at The Wick?"

"Well, no," said Frank, a little mystified at all this. "You see, there are no ladies at The Wick, except when some friends come to pay us a visit; and I am afraid my father and I are heretics in the matter of tea. It is generally understood that tea at four is one of the new religions coming in, you know, Mrs. Print."

"What nonsense, Mr. Morrice! Why, it is as old as the hills! I remember my mother—who was a Hampshire woman—saying that when she was a girl there was an old woman called Jane Windebank—a dear old thing!—who lived in her cottage

the girl? Are you ill, child?" Then, jumping up, she dashed at the uplifted handkerchief, and tore it down, and there was Susan in a convulsion of laughing. "There, now, I knew you were talking nonsense, Mr. Morrice. You know no more of the colour of Bianca's eyes than the man in the moon. You just happened to see Susan's, and then you made up all that nonsense in a minute. That's just what one of the canons used to do at York—he would come into Print's shop as grave as a judge, and then some one would ask him some question about a book, or a horse, or a donkey, or a caterpillar, or anything, no matter what; and then he would begin giving his opinions, and he'd go off to Africa for them, and then he'd come back to the High Street in York, and then he'd go off again to China, or the planet Jupiter, and down again into our kitchen perhaps—oh! dear, how he would

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the orange at him, and it going splash all over his face."

"That I shall," said Frank, laughing.

"There, now, only think! And then you'll tell him about Bianca's eyes, and all the nonsense about the colour, and Susan laughing like a ninny behind her work, and all sorts."

"I daresay," said Frank; "but I must be going, Mrs. Print, or I shall be late home, and I never keep the old tyrant waiting for dinner, or he might put me down in the dungeon with some cold mutton, and I rather object to rushlights in January, in a dungeon for a bed-room."

So Frank went off gaily, and Mrs. Print stood there for a minute talking to herself: "There now, you dear old Joe, there's a pretty story for you when you come,—or, stay, I shall write it all to him to-night, every bit, and then he'll sleep as sound as

a top. Only think—he knows everything, and he lets his son come here and see Susan. I wonder if he's a good man, after all. I hope he is. And if this one tells his father all about her and about Bianca's eyes, my wig! only think, why, if he's half an eye he must see what his son wants; and he couldn't do all this if he wasn't a good man, he couldn't—he couldn't. I do declare I'm as happy as a queen," she began singing.

"Begone, dull care, I prithee begone from me,
Begone, dull care, you and I shall never agree;
My wife shall dance,
And I shall sing,
And merrily pass the day."

"Begone dull care—good gracious!—I must write all this to Joe directly." And the little woman went off to give Susan a kiss, and write to her brother.

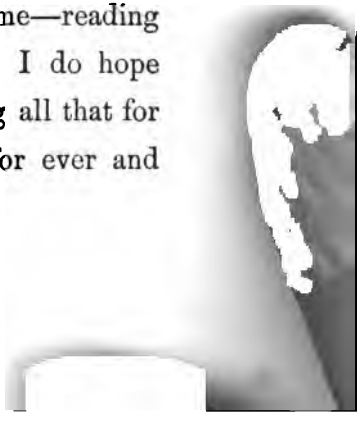
As Frank rode home, he thought over his visit, and this was the burden of his thoughts:—"I should like to know what

Susan's mother could have been like. She must have been one of those naturally-born ladies, to judge by her daughter, that one hears of sometimes. I remember some man saying that in Cornwall there is a type of woman quite different from those up here in our counties round London—slight, delicate women of the peasant class, that are in manner and appearance quite above their station—women of some other race, not of our flubsy Saxons. Perhaps her mother was one of them. Harding is a handsome fellow as one can see, and the right sort of man; but I have a faith in mothers as carrying on race, like dams of race-horses. Good dam—good foal, isn't a bad rule. Her head certainly is like that of the Milo Venus—far prettier to my mind than the Medici figure—a higher style of beauty. She never got that head and carriage of it out of Alfred's big bull-headed family. That

was very well said about the 'sacred and sweet'—there are a good many ladies who wouldn't have answered half as well—showed an innate sense of spiritual beauty I shouldn't have given her credit for. Only Nature could have taught her that, for it came out quite simply, as what she had thought when her aunt read those lines. I like those lines better than ever :—

> 'I saw her coral lips to move,
> And with her breath she did perfume the air ;
> Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her.'

That old Shakespeare certainly did hit the right nail on the head very often. But how odd it was the aunt reading 'The Taming of the Shrew' to her. I'm sure there is none of that in her; and it struck me all of a sudden that I was doing the same—reading a lesson of obedience to them. I do hope she did not think I was reading all that for her, or I should hate the play for ever and ever.



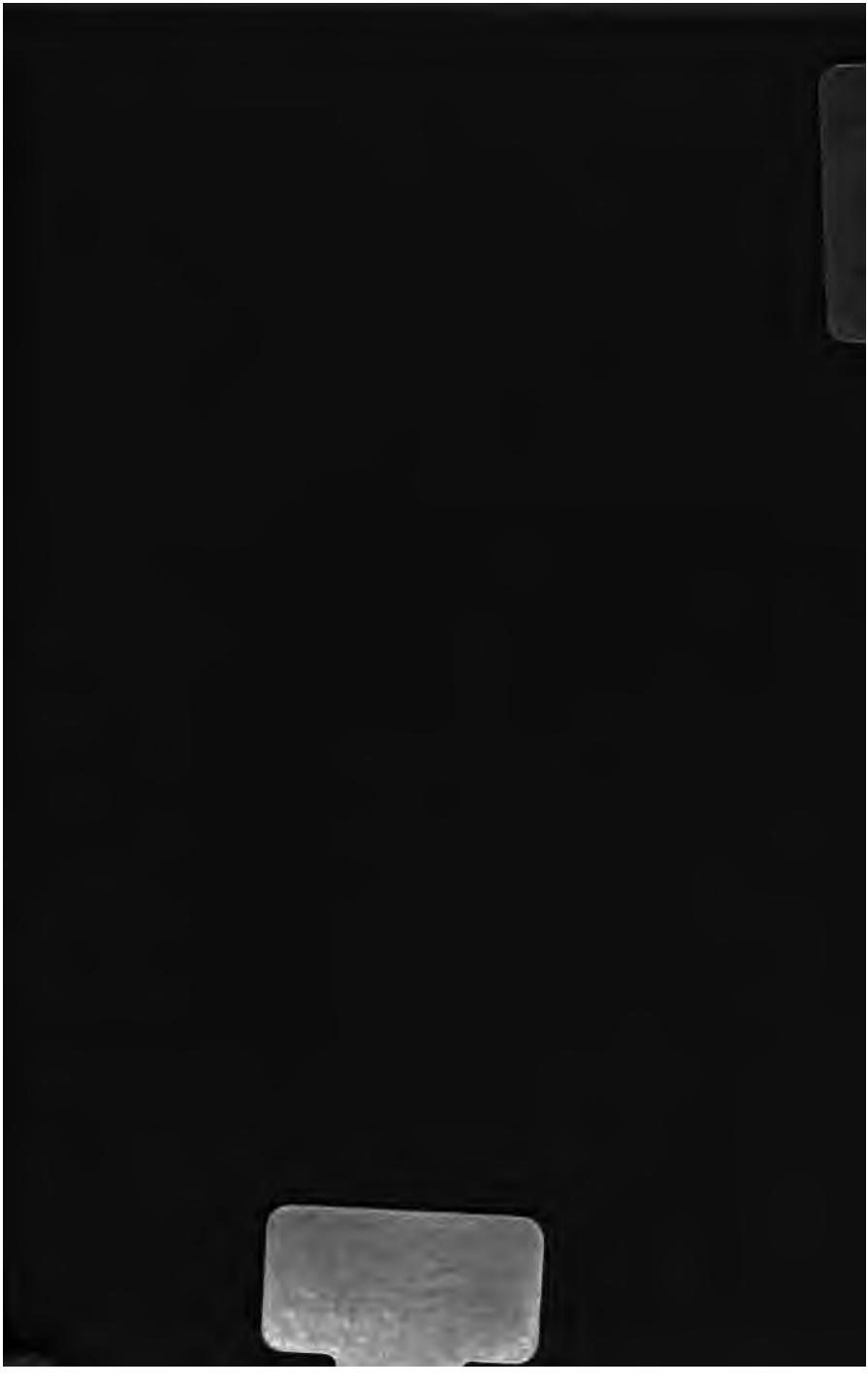
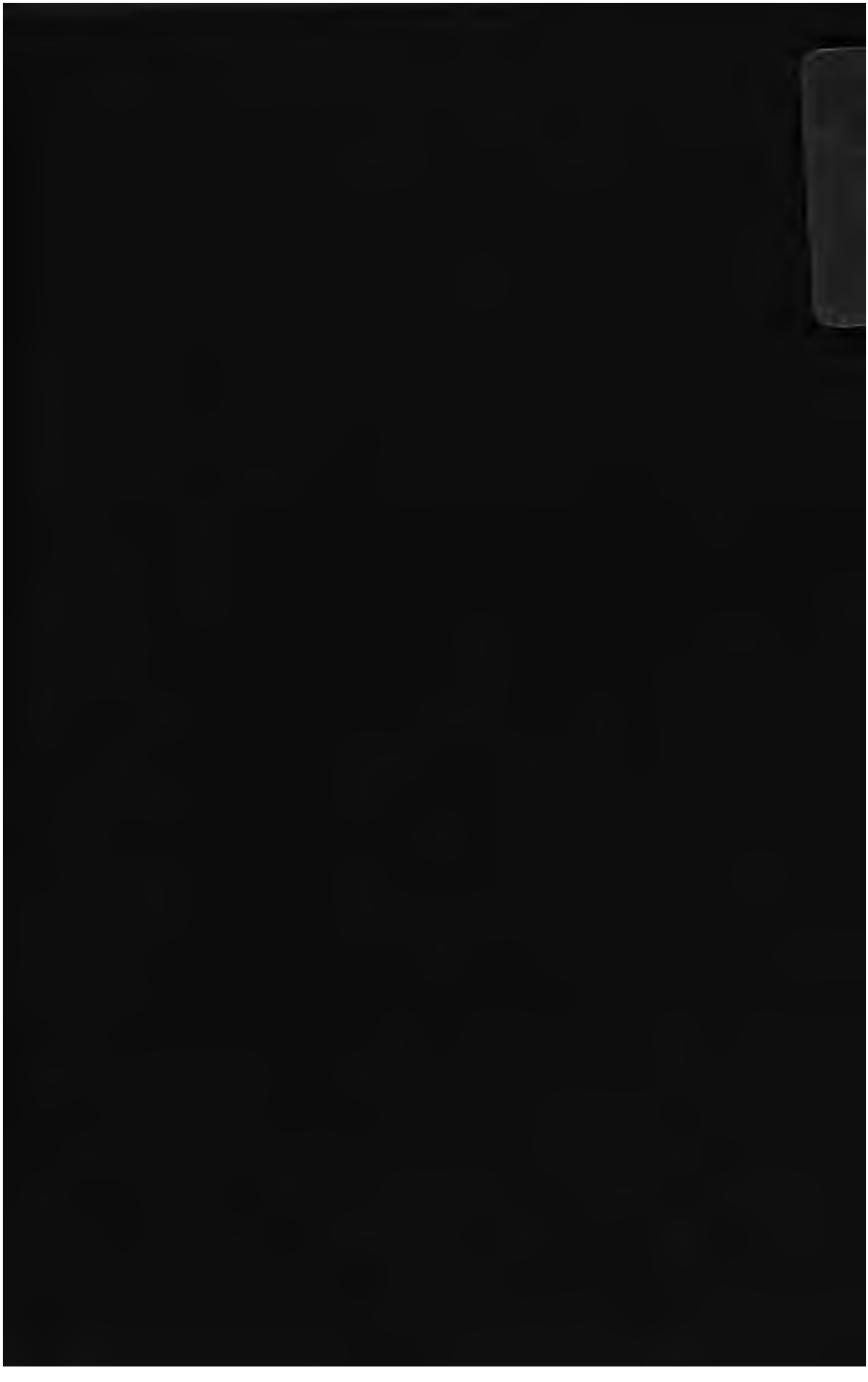
'Fie! fie! unknit that threatening, unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes.'

Of course those pretty, serious eyes could send an angry glance at any infernal ass that dared to upset her—she wouldn't be a woman else; but that is a long way from being shrewish. Bianca's eyes—that was good about their being perhaps green—showed a sense of fun; and how she laughed at my nonsense—such a ringing laugh, too, when aunt was going on about the mathematical cook on the kitchen floor—such a musical laugh—some women laugh like cats, and some like an Æolian harp—very few, and she's one. By-the-way, how about that Tom? I don't think she can have cared for that scamp. I must get her to tell me the story of Tom some day, poor devil! I wonder if she has any real suspicion about his killing that unfortunate Bob—for I'm pretty sure he did it. Poor

dear old Dad! I'm afraid he is put out about this. How strange that it should have grown up out of nothing—a mere chance! When I went down to the wharf that day, I had no idea of anything but a little curiosity to see the girl who owned the pup, and then comes all this. How singular! And Dad put to the test of his principles. But he comes out magnificently —true as steel, only a little vexed, of course, at his opinions on society as a work of art being upset for the nonce—turned against him; but then, as I tell him, 'tis only an exception; the rule is good, but I could no more give it up and marry anybody else—any one of the Annas, or Marions, or any other girls I see—clippers, too, many of them—than I could do, as the old aunt said about Susan going up the ladder with a load of bricks on her back—than fly in the sky. That aunt

is a queer one. How she went round the bush, pretending to beat for game about whether Dad knew of Susan and all this! I had a good mind to tease her, and put her by, when I found out her little game; but then she might have gone off and worried Susan by saying something, and that wouldn't do. How comical she is! But behind all that odd wandering talk she is shrewd enough—knows what she's at. Women are a puzzle—one moment half children, and the next as old hands and as clever as can be—say and do the absurdest things one minute, and the next are equal to a demand on real ability; and yet there are men who want to persuade the world that men and women are alike and equal. Certainly there is this similarity—and there these philosophers are right—there are some men of their own kind who have every sense apparently—wonderfully clever and

intense children—able in some things, babes in others. Dad says we are coming to an age of clever idiots—men in high places who are brilliant and foolish, who are pulling stones out of the foundation of our social building, while all the time they think they are making it stronger by putting stones on the top of it. I'm sure I don't know, but he says we are coming fast to an age of cant and violence—cant about liberty, and violence in the use of it. Well, it will be a rare reign to live under—one of cant and violence—highly delightful and very inartistic, as Dad would say; and very like the millennium."

But Frank was not very unhappy at this prospect, as he had in the foreground a certain face with deep blue eyes and a tinge of violet in them.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.